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ABSTRACT

This book is part of a series of case studies that demonstrate better ways to educate Ohio's students. The case study is part of the Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) Project, designed to support significant school-reform efforts among Ohio's elementary, middle, and high schools. This report describes the implementation of an innovative program at a high school in central Ohio. It is based on a 9-month study that included observations, analysis of documents, and interviews of faculty, staff, administrators, and other stakeholders. Some of the questions researchers asked about the program included: "What are the structures, strategies, and support networks that have been developed to encourage change?" and "What is the nature of the learning community at the high school, including themes, tensions, and complexities?" The text provides a history of the school and discusses the Coalition of Essential Schools. The coalition draws on nine principles, such as simple goals, to form a basis for change and renewal. Some of the features of the coalition that are described include student and teacher choice, personalization, authentic instruction, student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach, teaming, and staff development. The last chapter examines the collaboration, integration, inquiry, change, and vision that contribute to the TLC Project. The appendix describes the methodology. (Contains 30 references.) (RJM)

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OHIO
TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

As Diverse As The People We Serve

The Case Study of Reynoldsburg High School

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TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

AS DIVERSE AS THE PEOPLE WE SERVE:

THE CASE STUDY OF REYNOLDSBURG HIGH SCHOOL

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Ohio Department of Education
Columbus, Ohio
1999

Dear Readers:

The 12 Transforming Learning Communities case studies enlighten readers about the search for better ways to educate Ohio's young people. The stories, told by educators themselves, paint a realistic picture of schools in Ohio.

The unique and inspirational perspectives of the school people highlight the triumphs of team spirit, the drive to turn obstacles into opportunities, and the effort to consider complex questions and find answers that lead to higher student achievement. These researchers tell stories of success and frustration in the endeavor to make life better for future generations.

At the core of educational change is a long-term commitment to teaching and learning that has the potential for creating positive change throughout society. The case studies emphasize intense, high-quality professional development; increased service to others; a holistic approach to education; the promotion of a sense of community; and a deepened understanding of the daily work in the classrooms, corridors, and boardrooms of public schools.

The educators at the heart of change encourage us to examine and refresh our views about schools. Sincere thanks is extended to the local educators, university researchers, and concerned citizens for their willingness to examine the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequences of change.

Sincerely,

Linda C. Nusbaum

Linda C. Nusbaum
Research Project Manager

Transforming Learning Communities Project

INTRODUCTION

The Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) Project was an initiative funded by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to support significant school reform efforts among Ohio's elementary, middle, and high schools. Education researchers associated with the International Centre for Educational Change at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto were contracted to undertake in-depth case studies of school improvement in a select number of schools supported by Ohio's Venture Capital grants. The aim was to understand the school improvement efforts in these schools, and to engage other Ohio educators in the lessons learned from these schools' experiences.

The project title communicates the orientation to the study. "Learning communities" is a metaphor for schools as learning places for everyone (especially students and teachers) who has a stake in the success of schools as educational environments. "Transforming" signifies that the schools are in a process of change, and that the changes they are striving to achieve involve fundamental reforms in teaching and learning, assessment, organization, professional development, and/or governance. Transforming also captures the intent of the project to support — not just to document — the process of change in participating schools.

The TLC Project began in the Spring of 1997. A three-stage process was used to identify and select schools that had demonstrated notable progress in their efforts to implement significant change over the preceding three to five years: (1) solicitation of nominations from ODE staff familiar with the Venture Capital schools, corroborating opinions from independent sources (e.g., Regional Professional Development Center staff), and statistical profiles for nominated schools (e.g., performance and demographic data); (2) telephone interviews with the principal of each nominated school; and (3) ranking of schools according to relevant sampling criteria. Twelve schools were chosen for variation in type (elementary, middle, secondary); location (rural, urban, and suburban from various regions in Ohio); focus for change (e.g., teaching and learning, professional growth, school-community partnerships); school improvement model; and evidence of progress.

The individual case studies were carried out during the 1997/98 school year by teams consisting of at least two members of the school staff and researchers from four Ohio universities that partnered with the schools. Each team designed and implemented a multi-method study of school improvement activities and outcomes in their school learning community. These included interviews, observations, surveys, and documents. While each case study reflected the unique character of school change at each school, the studies employed a common conceptual framework to guide their exploration and analysis of change in these school learning communities. The TLC framework oriented the case study teams to investigate change and change processes in multiple contexts — the classroom, the corridors, and the community — and in relation to three key processes of learning in organizations: collaboration, inquiry, and integration.

The major products of the Transforming Learning Communities Project include 12 individual case study monographs, a cross-case study and handbook, and a companion video at www.ode.ohio.gov.

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Chapter One

An Introduction to Reynoldsburg High School

The Whole Climate Here Is Different

At 7:15 a.m., the winter sun is only hinting at its morning appearance in Central Ohio, but the activity level at Reynoldsburg High School is already high. A procession of buses pulls into the circular driveway in front of the school, and a steady stream of cars makes its way into the parking areas on either side of the school building. The vehicles must wait at the crosswalks, for students arriving on foot from nearby neighborhoods. The coming dawn provides a pale backdrop, while floodlights illuminate the main entrance and the auditorium complex at the front of the building. The liberal use of glass in the architectural design of the building allows the interior lighting to contribute to an almost festive atmosphere. To the east, the huge light towers, which preside over fall football games, do their part to emphasize that Reynoldsburg High School is a large and active presence in the Reynoldsburg community.

> *I think our administration is highly favorable to students and the parents, so they are listened to quite a bit. I've seen the school improvement committees being a part of that — what should we do about attendance, what should we do about this kind of thing — and opening up the decision making to the staff.* – A teacher

Inside, the students are moving toward classrooms or clustering for a few minutes of conversation before their first class, which begins at 7:25 a.m. Some students are gathered around the two security specialists who work at the school. The students make comfortable conversation with the security specialists, who spend their time in the morning alternately teasing and admonishing their charges, encouraging them to make good use of this day in school. Teachers travel to and from the main office, taking care of last-minute details, or talk with individual students or small groups in their classrooms. The principal and assistant principals are in the hallway, smiling, and talking to students as they make their way through the halls.

> *The whole climate here is different. [The other school where I taught] is rough around the edges. [Here there is] less fighting, less profanity, less disrespect in the hallways.... The administration is hugely different. The whole reason that I applied to Reynoldsburg was that I met [the principal] at a meeting and I was so impressed. I thought this is what an administrator is supposed to be like. I saw him with a teacher and he would defer to her, because she was the one with the experience. He's insightful, he's articulate, he's bright. He's very different from what I'm used to. He's empowering his teachers in how he talks. I like that.* – A second-year teacher

> *Our main goal, I think, whenever we make an improvement here, is that we keep asking ourselves, "Is this the best thing for kids? Is it the best thing for kids?" And when we can answer, "yes," then we move forward. If it's for the betterment of teachers, if that's just the top note, then we don't go for it. I think that is our goal and, theoretically, that is what we're about.* – A teacher

The Reynoldsburg students reflect the mostly middle-class neighborhoods that make up the school district. According to data supplied by the Ohio Department of Education for 1996, one in ten students in Reynoldsburg is African-American, one percent of the student body is Hispanic, and two percent is Asian. The school district's 1996 average income of $33,016 is slightly higher than the state average, while the Aid to Dependent Children percentage of 4.8% is considerably lower than the 16.6% average for the state. The average student attendance rate at Reynoldsburg High School of 91.1% is very near the state average of 93.6%.

> *We expect a lot out of students, but I think we know that our students have the ability to do more and we want to increase achievement. It's kind of the key. And professional development, so that we can stay up with the trends and work towards increasing achievement. Each of the teams somehow plays into that idea of how can we make this a better place for kids to learn. If we aren't increasing student achievement or if we aren't working to increase student achievement, then why are we here?* – A teacher

> *I'll take kids to competitions in mathematics and I'll compete them against the state of Ohio, and we will always end up easily in the top ten if not the top five so you explain to me the difference. We can't get them to pass a ninth-grade proficiency. Granted, I'm taking off the top. But we have got some darn good kids here and we can make other kids better. I'm getting 30 kids to stay after school to take a test. Why would they do that? They like the challenge. And the results that I see is that... our kids can stand right with [students from wealthier Columbus suburbs], side by side, and do just fine. I have several students that got perfect SAT scores in mathematics.* – A teacher

As Diverse as the People We Serve: The Case Study of Reynoldsburg High School

The interior of Reynoldsburg High School is bright and cheerful. Although the school's official colors are purple and gold, there is a minimal use of this particular palette in the interior decor. A purple-painted contemporary sculpture located near the main doors provides a splash of the school colors, but the color scheme inside is a more subtle pale gray and soft maroon. Several well-landscaped courtyards provide a break in the visual constancy of concrete block, metal, and glass, and green plants are placed strategically throughout the hallways, offices, and classrooms. Natural light from the courtyard areas makes an important contribution to the atmosphere in the hallways.

In most of the classrooms, the student desks are color-coordinated with the building color scheme — light gray desk tops and maroon seats. Teachers typically bring their own decorative touch to their classrooms, commonly covering the walls with brightly colored posters, occasionally warming the uncarpeted floors with area rugs and, in some cases, including furniture options beyond the typical desks. Some classrooms include wicker furniture, rocking chairs, or comfortable sofas.

A look inside a mathematics classroom provides some idea about the daily routines. Like the other classrooms in the newest section of Reynoldsburg High School, this particular classroom is bright. The clean, light gray tile floor and off-white walls reflect the overhead florescent lighting, as well as the natural light admitted through the single small window. The classroom walls are covered with hundreds of student pictures — the teacher's former students — some dating back more than 20 years. A few posters complete the classroom decorations, but the most descriptive feature is the large chalkboards covered with math problems.

The three rows of student desks are arranged in a semi-circular fashion facing the front of the room, as if the students were expected to observe a lecture. No lecture is being presented, however. The teacher is at the back of the room, working with two students at the board. She finishes, and another student takes advantage of her availability. "...Will you help us with number 13?" The students have been assigned 14 word problems that employ right triangles. Sometimes they work individually, sometimes in groups. The group-work approach permits students to use one another as resources, supplementing the teacher's input. The composition of the student groups is flexible. The teacher has developed a system which allows for restructuring.

When the students have exhausted either their problems or their ideas, the teacher calls their attention to a new problem, this time written on the chalkboard. The entire class participates in the formation of strategies to solve the problem. Working both individually and in groups, the students offer answers as they work them out. Not all of their suggestions are accepted, but there is no penalty for thinking out loud. The teacher says, "When you have all three [answers], stand up." Within a few minutes, students begin to stand. Three minutes later, half the class is on its feet. The teacher begins to ask questions and the students answer in unison. Using the same triangle that she used in the initial question, the teacher restructures the problem. The students are seated and then are given 90 seconds to find a solution. Soon they again begin to stand. Some of them lean over the desks of their peers and offer help. "What's the difference between this one and what we did on the other?" asks the teacher. The students volunteer their responses, the teacher confirms, and the students again take their seats.

Before dismissing the class, the teacher reminds her students of the review session available between six and eight o'clock that evening. She recommends that they take advantage of the opportunity before their approaching mid-term exam.

Down the hall, another mathematics class begins. The 17 students are at the board doing "warm up." The students have a discussion sheet from which they are working. When they complete their work, they return to their seats in anticipation of the teacher's opening lecture.

There are graphing calculators on each desk. The teacher uses an overhead projector, her notes, and the board to deliver about 10 minutes of direct instruction about tangents, and then gives them an exercise to complete. All the while, she is moving around the room, looking over shoulders, giving feedback, asking follow-up questions, and fielding questions from students. There is a rolling dialogue about the activity at hand.

"Now's a great time to ask for help," says the teacher. "I'm walking around checking to see if you're doing it okay." The students remain on task for about 10 minutes. The 11 o'clock bell rings, but no attention is paid to it. "Look at your reference sheet," smiles the teacher. "I don't want to call it your cheat sheet."

The classroom walls are decorated with several posters, including ones which say, "Attitude's the mind's paintbrush. It can color any situation" "An error doesn't become a mistake until you refuse to correct it"; and a Garfield poster, "Success comes in cans not cannots."

The teacher does about 10 minutes more on reference angles and then moves on to solving a right triangle. "I want to play around with the calculators a little bit to make sure you know how to plug in the numbers. We're going to solve a right triangle in your notes. That's the goal."

A bell rings at 11:20 a.m. Someone gets up and closes the door as students pass in the hall. The teacher's calculator is plugged into the overhead projector so that students can watch as she works through the problem. One student says she's lost, but will touch base after school so as not to delay the lesson. "I'll come in later rather than you taking all your class time." The student sitting in front of her turns around to talk her through it.

The teacher explains that they will be doing a physics experiment outside the next day and will need this skill of solving a right triangle in order to complete the work of the experiment. "Now let's go to the homework for the last thing." As they work through the problems, the students help each other with prompts.

In the media center, another class is taking place. The students have been completing research over the last three days toward completion of a Mt. Rushmore project. They are to pick four Americans living in the twentieth century and research their contributions. The four must include one president, one family member who has had an effect on their life, one celebrity, and one member of a minority group. The students are to sit no more than five to a table. They work individually, using encyclopedias and other reference books. The project will include a written report, with three paragraphs on each person, and an illustration of their mountain sculpture.

In another wing of the building, the walls of a Spanish class are overflowing with posters, banners, snapshots, maps, advertisements, tapestries, travel brochures, artwork, and student products, all reflecting the language and culture of Spain. The teacher carries on a lively, nonstop lecture, delivered almost entirely in Spanish. Her rare use of English seems out of place, an incongruent break in the rhythm of the Spanish words. The students occasionally interrupt with questions, usually posed in English. The teacher's answers, however, are always in Spanish.

The subject today is history. The teacher is elaborating on material that the students just finished reading — the mid-nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century history of the southern United States. She is sharing the Spanish-American perspective on the policies of the U. S. government as they affected the Hispanic population of that place and time.

The students listen closely, following the rapid-fire Spanish without difficulty. Their comprehension is demonstrated by a sudden change in the pace and direction of the lecture. Without any English cues, the students rise from their seats and form into groups of four. The teacher passes out sets of index cards and explains the task that she has designed. Speaking only in Spanish, she travels among the groups, asking questions of the students, and providing clarification about the activity. As they work in their groups, the students speak to each other in both English and Spanish.

Within 10 minutes, a new activity is introduced. The students are rewarded with Tootsie-Pops; the teacher turns on some upbeat Spanish rock music (the students spontaneously sing along with the chorus); and everyone moves to the chalkboard on which they write their Spanish summaries of the previous activity. All English is abandoned for this portion of the class; the students phrase their explanations exclusively in Spanish.

The sense about this class is that it is fun. The teacher is happy. The students are happy. The 90-minute class period slips by quickly. The short walk to the classroom of this part of Reynoldsburg High School is a temporary, yet very real, transition into another culture.

The Western Civilization classroom is in the older part of Reynoldsburg High School. Although this room is clean and well-maintained, the paint on the walls is not as fresh as that in some other rooms. Reference books line the set of bookshelves on one wall; maps and historical information cover the bulletin boards. The teacher begins his lecture as soon as all the students are seated. Today's subject is the Industrial Revolution. The teacher's lecture pace is quick, punctuated by words and phrases which he writes on the chalkboard. The students are quiet and attentive, adding to their class notes as the teacher speaks. The teacher is animated as he talks: He gestures and moves back and forth across the front of the classroom, pausing to add information on the chalkboard, and leaning forward to emphasize certain points. The lecture is not a strict monologue, however. Every few minutes, a question is directed to the students. Volunteers raise their hands and, when called upon, offer their answers. Some students ask follow-up questions, but within a short time, the lecture moves on.

Within the time set aside for this class, a lot of subject content is covered. The class is shortened on this day because of a special assembly planned for the afternoon, but no time has been wasted. The bell interrupts the teacher's final summary comments, forcing him to conclude for the day.

In the school hallways, the numerous display cases which feature athletic achievements and student-produced artwork are inadequate to hold all the student products. Others hang on the walls throughout the building. Student-created sculptures, paintings, photographs, essays, poems, and other work highlight the personal emphasis that Reynoldsburg High School seeks to maintain.

> *I think at Reynoldsburg, we are given a great deal of freedom as far as our curriculum goes and as far as our methods, our pedagogy. I can't imagine having as much freedom in another setting. I feel very fortunate with what we have here — the respect of our administrators as far as backing up our ideas, as long as we have some research or something to back up what we want to try. I've been very grateful for the support of the school administration.* – A teacher
>
> *A lot of it was generated by [the former principal's] general freedom of trusting you to make the right choice for your classroom. [The current principal] has tried to follow in those same footsteps. It's just a personal trust that you're making the right decision for your kids. That, and the feeling that if you make a mistake, you're just human. If you make a mistake, you correct it the next time around.* – A teacher
>
> *Everybody is involved. Everybody has some stake in this company. We're a very great staff. We're very supportive of each other, and I think we really like each other. ... People really focus on students. This is a student-centered staff. I think the philosophy is, "We can do this. We can make change. We can make things better. We can make learning occur, regardless of who the child is. All kids can learn." Everybody is saying that today, but it's true, and I think people in this building strongly believe that.* – A teacher

Students move freely about the halls and there is an atmosphere of relaxed freedom about the school. The two security professionals adopt a friendly, respectful attitude toward the students, and are well respected in return. Matters of student discipline are shared by three deans of students, by teaching teams, and by assistant principals. Parents are always contacted in discipline matters. The halls and grounds are constantly monitored, and the school is orderly, clean, and free of any significant tension between students and staff, or among the students themselves.

> *We've got a couple of discipline problems. Their problems are so huge. We work with the families and we work with the administration. So that part of working on a team is really good. We all have the same kids. It's like what can we do to help him focus and try to problem solve. ... There are some kids whose problems are much too big. We'll do what we can. We talk to the parents a lot, and have the parents in with the students and talking and saying, "What can we do?" And have the parents involved in creating plans. So I like that approach. – A teacher*

> *We were given the task last year of handling all discipline ourselves on our team.... It used to be if you had a problem, you would just take it to the appropriate administrator or dean. The students know that if they cause a problem, they don't have the opportunity of giving a different story to an administrator who might then not have the true situation. ... If a kid messes up in my class, the kid comes to us, as a team, but I'm the one who witnessed the whole thing, so he can't tell a different story. The school has an afternoon detention on Tuesday and Thursday. If you want to assign a detention, the student goes to a particular room on those two days. As a team, we just assign our own, and the kids serve detention with us in our classroom. Nine out of ten times, those turn into tutoring sessions. A kid has to be in the room with his teacher; we might as well help him with his homework, which cuts down on a lot of detentions. –* A freshman teacher

This orderly atmosphere, however, does not eliminate all problems. With almost 2,000 students in the building, disagreements and code of conduct violations inevitably arise.

Further, not all teachers are always successful in their efforts to provide instruction, and students can be uncooperative and disrespectful. In one particular classroom, the lights are turned off and the teacher is at the front of the room with a globe and flashlight, demonstrating sunlight angle for the students. Students are seated at small tables, two to each one. Some are facing the front of the room watching the teacher's demonstration, but many have their chairs turned toward the table behind them, as if they were working in groups of four. The class is reasonably quiet, but some students are not paying attention to the demonstration. The teacher finishes her remarks, puts down the flashlight, and asks one of the students to turn on the lights.

The room is large and bright, with white walls, ceilings, floor tiles, and table tops. The classroom is reminiscent of an operating room. The students maintain their positions at their tables, many of them facing the table behind them so that four students are clustered around one small table. The students are all freshmen, and many of them are uninterested in the teacher's lecture. They look around the room, carry on conversations with the others in their clusters, or stare sleepy-eyed toward the front of the room.

The teacher peppers her lecture with questions so as to engage the students' attention. Without raising their hands, some of the students randomly answer those questions. "This is not working well for you to have your chairs facing away from me," says the teacher. "Please turn your chairs around." Those whose chairs are facing the rear of the room dutifully turn themselves around.

The teacher wants to begin group work, so she gives the students a project to be completed in groups of four. As she begins to explain the activity, the teacher senses their inattentiveness and continually admonishes her students to "listen closely or you won't know what to do." She is anxious for the students to get started on the group work, saying, "There is more information that I would like to give you, but we seem to be dealing with a lot of restlessness here."

Half of the students once again turn their chairs around to face the table behind them, dividing themselves into groups of four, and look at the written instructions provided by the teacher. The teacher travels from group to group, clarifying the instructions and offering assistance. Many students refuse to engage. Two students leave the room, and two others get up from their seats and begin to walk around the room. Others engage in idle activity and horseplay. Gradually the volume level of the classroom to rises. Only when the teacher is talking directly to their particular work group do the students give attention to their assignment. After a few minutes, more students are out of their seats, wandering about the room. One group of students does appear to be working on the assignment, but for the others, the class has deteriorated into a social gathering. A few students choose not to socialize, but to sit alone, reading or sleeping.

The teacher attempts to reconvene the class so that they can discuss the results of their group work. She has to make several requests before all the students return to their seats. Once the students are seated, the teacher still must compete with considerable surface chatter and inattentiveness. A few students attempt to answer the teacher's questions, but an equal number of others are deliberately distracting. "Are you guys just so totally uninterested that you can't keep your attention up here?" asks the teacher. In some cases, the students give answers that they know are incorrect or irrelevant, simply to frustrate the teacher. There is a potential that the teacher will lose control of the class. The teacher increases her pleas for cooperation and the students maintain that cooperation at a bare minimum level, giving the teacher an opportunity to conclude the class with some degree of grace. Without any signal from a dismissal bell or permission from the teacher, the students begin to drift from the classroom, leaving the room empty, and the teacher standing alone at the front.

The teacher is philosophical about the lesson:

> *I'm finding new ways. I'm trying to figure out what works. It seems like the option most used is punitive, and I have a hard time with that because I don't believe that it works. ... If I need to ask them to stay after school, it's so we can have some privacy, so we can discuss the behavior issue. It's not like stay after and do your time; I think that's worthless. I'm just trying to figure out how to fit it into the system and make it work.* – A teacher

A sting operation and resultant drug bust involving eight student drug dealers made local headlines in December 1997 and forced the school to publicly address the more unhappy side of housing and educating large numbers of adolescents every day.

> *... I think it would be nice if we had metal detectors, more security here at the school, just to make sure parents know that their kids are safe. [The drug bust has] given out kind of a bad reputation about the high school. ... I think the metal detectors would make us feel more safe and be good for our image. I do not feel unsafe, but I'm pretty sure that there are students here that have those feelings. ... There are students who will show the weapons and threaten to kill the people."* – A student

> *I'm not saying that kids aren't doing drugs. But I'm not sure that it's a problem that I'm solving in my classroom. I think it's a problem that I solve with my kids in my home, just like everyone else solves problems with their kids. I'm working with kids in community action and they're doing all these wonderful things in the community, and now I'm sitting here hearing how bad they are and how we need to tighten a grip on them. I did write a letter to the whole staff. ... I just felt like that something needed to be said to counter balance this. ... We don't need to make wholesale, sweeping, dictatorial, ruthless changes in how we operate to make every kid feel like they're in prison.* – A teacher

Much of the reform literature directs itself to reconceptualizing teacher work, broadening the teachers' professional profiles beyond the classroom, the department, the team, in ways that distribute faculty energies more evenly across individual team and schoolwide responsibilities (Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1989). Even at Reynoldsburg, few teachers approach such a balance, and yet, this is the goal. "I think our administration has given us the opportunity to make the decisions and to take that on upon ourselves as a staff, so that you feel you have some ownership in it. I think we have that there for us."

Over the past seven years, leaders and teachers have acted deliberately to bring about change. The superintendent's style welcomes this, indeed requires it. The paramount task of the district administrator, according to Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991), is not to get this or that innovation put into practice, but to build the capacity of the district and the schools to handle innovations. "I do believe that the school improvement plans are contained to that building level, that site level, rather than district level," the superintendent says. "I would say that it has to be attributed to some lead teachers, as well as the building principal."

Some of this has been constructive, some counterproductive. With changes in leadership and staffing, these planned changes have been complicated by unintended discontinuity. A student adds her perspective:

> *They need to get their act together. Every time they give us a date, they don't make it. ... Our student IDs: They had us come in this summer to have our pictures taken, so we could have them the second week of school, and we got them a month and a half ago. Arena scheduling: we were supposed to start at the beginning of this week or last week; now it's moved up to the end of May. There's a real problem somewhere.* – A student

The reforms never sought to dismantle what is and begin again. No school could afford this amount of disruption. Yet the new leadership at Reynoldsburg has been willing to suspend momentary consensus and risk discord in order to encourage changes of habit on a broader scale. Pushing the reforms out into the school beyond isolated centers of innovation requires that school leaders risk failing in large ways. Reynoldsburg's efforts to change the nature of teacher duties, and involve all teachers directly in school improvement decisions (which are described in the pages that follow) challenge long-standing habits. Faculty responsibilities are redefined, shifting focus out from the classroom and into the corridors, and perhaps even beyond the school, toward the boardroom. In terms of teacher work, this constitutes a significant shift, one which requires teachers to value different sorts of activities and to build different kinds of work relationships.

These activities and relationships place teachers at a vantage point from which to view their classroom work anew. For the most part, the story of Reynoldsburg High School which follows is told from the vantage point of the teachers who work there, supplemented by the perspectives of students, parents, and administrators.

The shift of focus beyond the classroom may provide teachers with fresh perspectives on the responsibilities that comprise their teaching practice, but that perspective is not guaranteed to be a happy, friendly, or cooperative one. The present condition of "controlled chaos" (characterized thus by the current building principal) at Reynoldsburg High School may represent the early stages of fundamental change in teacher work life. Such turmoil may be, in fact, a necessary antecedent to institutionalizing new habits of school life.

History

For us, at the Reynoldsburg Schools, site-based decision making, commitment to community involvement, and building the capacity to handle innovations and improvements are not just empty words. Our district is undergoing nothing less than a complete metamorphosis.

These opening words of the Venture Capital grant, submitted by Reynoldsburg High School in October of 1993, characterize the recent history of the Reynoldsburg City School District. The district's flagship building, Reynoldsburg High School, was one of three Reynoldsburg school buildings which applied for, and subsequently received, a first-round Venture Capital grant designed to further school improvement efforts which had begun in the district years earlier. The Venture Capital grant facilitated the high school's involvement with the Coalition of Essential Schools, although membership in the coalition, and the establishment of reform approaches associated with the coalition, were established in 1991 — two years in advance of the high school's Venture Capital application.

Among high schools in Ohio, Reynoldsburg has been a leader in school improvement initiatives, pioneering block scheduling, teaming, learner-centered instruction, and authentic assessment techniques. According to the Venture Capital application document, during the 1991-92 school year, school improvement programs at Reynoldsburg High School attracted the attention of more than 1,000 Ohio educators and dozens of teachers and administrators from other states and five countries, who visited the Reynoldsburg schools for a first-hand look at the programs operating there. In 1992, the Reynoldsburg schools were awarded a national A+ For Breaking the Mold by the United States secretary of education. The years of school improvement prior to the Venture Capital award also resulted in several Instructional Leadership conferences sponsored by the Buckeye Association of School Administrators which were attended by hundreds of Ohio school administrators. Reynoldsburg High School reports that more than 3,000 educators have visited their school in the last 10 years.

Reynoldsburg High School has been as much a model for Venture Capital as a recipient of its benefits. By the time of the Venture Capital award, Reynoldsburg High School was already employing double-blocked classes and had already established multi-disciplinary courses through their World Connections and American Cultural Studies programs. The high school was encouraging staff development through a weekly Wednesday morning initiative known as Primetime Wednesday, and the school district had used the Effective Schools Process as a springboard to site-based commitments by each of its individual school buildings. Venture Capital was not a beginning for Reynoldsburg High School but a continuation of the bold and visionary ideas born years in advance of their Venture Capital award.

A Reynoldsburg teacher who is also a former student compares the school that he knew as a student with the present-day high school and marvels at the rapid changes which have occurred.

> *Those years when I was gone was when all this really began. It's when the original teams were formed. It's when the first double-blocking classes came on. It's when the first [advanced placement] classes came on. There was no such thing as Primetime. We had the general track, the college prep track, and the advanced track. You were one of those three areas and you did your thing. The master schedule was pretty much the same from year to year to year. There wasn't a whole lot of change in it. Now, it's immense. The decisions and the way those decisions are made is just incredible here now.* – A teacher/former student

The modern history of Reynoldsburg High School possibly begins in 1987, the year that the high school was awarded an Effective Schools grant designed to aid in the formation of a school mission statement. This modest grant of about $4,000 provided the staff an opportunity to get together and discuss the things that they thought were important in the school, and to identify what their students needed to know. The former principal credits the Effective Schools process for helping the school evolve. "That gave us a little bit of grant money and asked, 'What is the mission of your school?' I [copied] that baby every year and put it in teachers' notebooks."

A committee was formed of representatives from the departments of English, social studies, mathematics, science, guidance, and administration. This committee met for two and a half days in a retreat, using that time to create a school mission statement.

> *I allowed the staff to select some and I selected some. But I made sure that I had the union president. I took the voices that were listened to here. ... We went into a retreat setting and brought a mission statement back to the entire faculty. They had some conversations around it and then we came with another rendition of it.* – A former principal

Although it has been modified somewhat over recent years, the mission statement that emerged continues to serve as the frame for reform initiatives at the high school:

Mission Statement

> *The staff of Reynoldsburg High School upholds the basic premise that all students can learn. To that end, we are committed to provide the best educational opportunities for every learner. The mission of Reynoldsburg High School is to have our students:*

- *Demonstrate a mastery of communication skills.*
- *Exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society.*
- *Develop an understanding of the global interdependence of people, society and the environment.*
- *Use effective thinking skills across the curriculum.*
- *Develop a tone of trust and decency.*

A second opportunity which allowed the staff to incorporate their work on the mission statement was the scheduled review of the high school by the North Central Association. Rather than take the traditional approach to the North Central process, the staff at Reynoldsburg chose a method that was more compatible with the school's new emphasis. The review option known as Outcomes Accreditation seemed to fit well with the school's newly created mission statement.

> *Outcomes Accreditation was intriguing to us, because it said the first thing you have to do is have a mission statement. We said, we've done the first thing. Then it talked about measuring definite outcomes that the school has established and we said, really, if you look at the tenets of our mission statement, the tenets of our missions statement should be what we measure around.* – Former principal

The high school's mission-statement exercise associated with Effective Schools and the Outcomes Accreditation process of the North Central Association helped prepare the school community for their exposure to the Coalition of Essential Schools. The Coalition of Essential Schools was founded through the research and writing of Theodore R. Sizer, a professor at Brown University. It is a partnership between high schools and Brown University designed to strengthen student learning through the reformation of high school priorities and the simplification of high school structures. Each member high school applies a core of nine principles (more recently a tenth principle has been added) in order to develop its own unique plan. Coalition schools stress the professional perspectives of teachers through collaborative forms of school management, and emphasize the central importance of students by focusing on student social and academic behavior.

> *I think it was the fall of 1989 or … 1990. I had something of Sizer's, … and knew he sounded like he had common sense in his thinking. He just resonated with me to the point that I followed that attendance up with attendance at the fall forum in St. Louis. When I went there, I was one of eight Ohioans there. There wasn't much happening in Ohio. But I brought those nine common principles back. …. I just held a faculty meeting in no more than 35 or 40 minutes, and I said, these are the nine things that this guy is promoting that might make a difference in our school if we begin to think about them.* – Former principal

Fullan & Stiegelbauer(1991) indicate that all major research on innovations and school effectiveness shows that the principal strongly influences the likelihood of change (p. 76); Johnson (1996) says that the building principal has the greatest influence on teacher work (p. 124); and Short and Greer (1997) indicate that the principal is the key to a trusting school environment (p. 52). The behavior of the former high school principal at Reynoldsburg is consistent with these observations. The initiatives of the former principal and the persistence that he demonstrated in pursuing his interest in the Coalition of Essential Schools was a significant factor in its eventual implementation at Reynoldsburg High School. His early efforts to gain funding and to recruit support from the Ohio Department of Education were not always productive.

> *... When I inquired with the Ohio Department of Education about the Coalition of Essential Schools, I was told by an assistant superintendent that the Classroom of the Future was the reform effort in Ohio and that there wasn't going to be another reform effort in Ohio. So when I first approached them, they really turned me on my ear. But I refused to let that stop me. ... [During a family trip] I went to Providence [home of Brown University] and knocked on the door and said, "I want to talk to somebody." ...This is where we are: It's good stuff, and we can't get anybody's attention because we've got this going on in our state ..." We got on their mailing list. I met Sizer that day. We at least made ourselves known that we were wanting some attention.* – Former principal

By the following school year, changes at the Ohio Department of Education created a unique opportunity for the principal and teachers of Reynoldsburg High School and their pursuit of membership in the coalition.

> *That next fall, [Ted] Sanders becomes superintendent and he says, "Why isn't there any [Coalition of Essential Schools] work?" And he finds that there are pockets of work; Cincinnati Woodward and Reynoldsburg are doing some of the work. So he puts out a request for proposal (RFP) for $96,000 for two schools to employ and promote coalition principles in the state of Ohio. So we sent in the grant. The board president and superintendent signed the grant. ... We get the grant.* – Former principal

Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) say that initiation of change never occurs without an advocate and that the district superintendent is one of the most powerful of potential advocates for school improvement (p. 93). The former principal also credits the encouragement of the new district superintendent as one of the reasons for his ability to bring new ideas into his school.

> *I give [the current superintendent] credit in that he came to the district and said, "You're too parochial in your thinking. You're all thinking about central Ohio, [but] you really need to get beyond central Ohio." He became a superintendent who said, "Get out of the state." Our prior superintendent had said, "Don't leave the state, it's too expensive." So one of the things that I did was go to the National Principals Convention for the first time, and Sizer was a keynoter, and I listened to the guy speak.* – Former principal

The superintendent is an advocate of school improvement and continues to be a major promoter of change in the district.

> *I came in 1988. I think that [the principal] was already doing some things on some small scale at that point, and then it accelerated, partly because of my predisposition that we have to do much, much more to meet the students' needs in the public school.* – District superintendent

In order to facilitate discussion on coalition principles and to provide a relaxed atmosphere where the implications of those principles could be considered, the former principal established a weekly after-school meeting which became known as "paradigm benders."

> *I said, "If there are those who want to continue that conversation, we're going to do Wednesdays for an hour. I'll buy the pizza. We'll take them one at a time. What does student-as-worker or teacher-as-coach mean? We'll spend time with that." And so we began what we came to call a series of paradigm benders, where we'd try to bend the paradigm a little bit.* – Former principal

A teacher who was part of the paradigm bender sessions remembers them as a valuable experience where Coalition principles got a thorough examination through faculty discussion.

> *The Coalition came in before we were finished with North Central, and we started talking about it. We liked the delivery system of the integrated teams. We liked the idea of the personalization, and that's basically where the block classes came from. We subscribed to the principles that were a part of the Coalition, and we started that by having paradigm benders. We'd take one of the Coalition principles … and discuss it — [Such as] … What did it mean to personalize instruction? And that really got people thinking about how it pertained to them and how it could be applied in the classroom. We always had over 20. You could come and stay as long as you wanted. That really got people talking.* – A teacher

After a series of paradigm bender meetings, the former principal and certain members of his staff, arranged a trip to Louisville, Kentucky to visit a school which was part of the Coalition of Essential Schools. The trip to Louisville resulted in scheduling changes designed to facilitate Coalition principles. Reynoldsburg High School began to incorporate double-blocked periods and to consider the formation of interdisciplinary, grade-level teams. Teachers who hoped to take advantage of the double-blocked periods, who were considering an integrated, team-teaching format, or who otherwise wished to participate in the new instructional approaches endorsed by the Coalition Principles, spent most of that summer planning for the new school year.

> *Now, we're talking about May and June. Kids have already registered and we're going to start this in August. So I said, "We're just going to move forward with this." I went over to talk with [the superintendent] and said, "This is what weire doing." I said, "It's just a different delivery. It's the same courses of study, but I don't have time to sell this, we're just moving forward." He kind of hemmed and hawed, but we went ahead and did it. And we identified the kids with computer. Teachers went to work that summer planning interdisciplinary units and they were getting geared up.* – Former principal

The new schedule and corresponding instructional approaches were implemented quietly and quickly. Little time was spent in discussion about the advantages and disadvantages, and no time was devoted to worrying about reactions of students and parents. Reynoldsburg High School chose to move forward with a limited number of teachers and students and deal with problems as they presented themselves. "I really felt like if we waited on a majority to move," indicates the former principal, "that it wouldn't move at all." Elmore (1995) suggests this is typical of reform efforts, that is, "gathering up the faithful and concentrating them in one place in order to form a cohesive community of like-minded practitioners ... develop[ing] organizational structures that intensify and focus rather than dissipate and scatter intrinsic motivation to engage in challenging practice" (pp. 23-26). "In retrospect," the former principal reflects, "I felt that we almost low keyed our changes so much that it almost became secretive."

> *Now it is August. We still haven't told [the students] that they are in any different delivery system. Nor have we told their parents. I told the teachers, "Behave normally for 10 days. That means don't talk to each other a lot. Don't relate to disciplines. Certainly don't talk about an exhibition unit. Just be normal high school teachers in your isolated ways." Because we had a policy that said after 10 days you couldn't drop a class. They did a pretty good job. But kids started figuring it out. They started saying, "What's going on here? They mentioned something in English that had to do with history."* – Former principal

After several weeks, pressure began to build as more students and parents started to realize that the high school had made significant changes in the delivery of instruction. It soon became time to face those involved and explain clearly what the program was all about.

> *We sent out a letter at the end of the fifth week to the parents saying, "By the way, your son or daughter is in a different delivery system. If you'd like to know more about it we're going to hold a meeting in the media center." We packed the house. It was one of my most anxious moments as a principal because we didn't know what to think. But we explained the research. A couple of the teachers did a quick five-minute piece on how they planned to employ the two or three principles that meant the most to them. We opened it up for questions and the very first question was, "My son is a sophomore, how can I insure that he'll be in the program as a junior?" The second question was, "Why did you only do it with 200 kids?" And the third question was, "It's about time you guys did something." I felt so confident at the end of the evening that I said, "If this is not for your son or daughter you need to see me and we'll make the switch." We had about 200 kids in the program, and I had one parent come up that night.* – Former principal

Initial enthusiasm for the program began to diminish as the students realized that the new instructional program meant new expectations in student performance.

> *When we started assessing differently, when they started noticing that Billy down the hall is watching a movie the day before Thanksgiving and I'm doing an exhibition the day before Thanksgiving; this stinks. So we had kids that wanted out. ... I spent the year hold-*

> *ing the line. I got bloody over it with some parents and kids. But I said, "You had your chance. We had the meeting." I felt that if I [shouldn't start] caving to kids not wanting to work hard. [Hard work] is why we designed it. They wanted out for two reasons. They wanted out because it was too hard and they wanted out because we knew them too well.* – Former principal

From an organizational point of view, the initial implementation of the Coalition Principles was conducted in a decidedly uncollaborative manner. The former principal explains why:

> *When we decided to do what we did, we figured that there could be about 10 teachers in the configuration (two math, two science, two English, two social studies, an art, a music, and a special education). We had our DH teacher, by the way, which was our union president, who said, "My DH kids can do some of this and I want in on the program." Philosophically, I wasn't opposed to that. I felt that there were some things that they could do, and also it was smart with the union. And so we moved in that configuration. But the interesting piece was we had more teachers that wanted in the program.* – Former principal

The school schedule was not designed to accommodate more teachers that year, and once the decisions about appropriate participants had been made, there was little that the school principal could do to satisfy those interested faculty members who would have to wait their turn. In order to maintain the enthusiasm of those on the waiting list, the principal went to the superintendent for permission to take a group of teachers to the Fall Forum of the Coalition of Essential Schools in Chicago.

> *We had to interview our own faculty and make decisions who was going to be in this program and who wasn't. That created another catch-22. Some of these people had been meeting with us over paradigm benders and pizza for weeks. All of a sudden they're being told that they can't be part of the employment of the principles. Again I credit [the superintendent]. I went to [him] and I said, "I really need help here." We had interviewed and we were trying to make decisions in May and June on who was going to be in. I said, "I need help." ... What I want to be able to do is to tell those that aren't in, you're not in, but pack your bags, you're going to Chicago with us. We've got to find other ways to employ these principles." So [he] let me have about $20,000 and I spent it all on taking 19 people to Chicago the following fall. That, too, was another huge boost because we went there, they went in search of other ways to employ the principles. That's where double-blocking was born. And other interdisciplinary work, other ideas.* – Former principal

Reynoldsburg High School's association with the Coalition of Essential Schools led to the creation and development of the programs and practices which now characterize the school. These include a master schedule which incorporates extended double-blocked teaching periods; team-teaching options that include grade-level teaching teams; staff development opportunities which feature a daily common planning time for all teachers and small group support teams known as Critical Friends Groups; a collaborative management system which invites teacher input through participation in school improvement committees; and a learner-centered teaching philosophy which places a greater emphasis on group work, independent research projects, and authentic assessment activities.

As these instructional approaches were being developed, the high school also experienced a significant increase in student enrollment. Some of this increase was due to the general growth of the school district's population, but a sudden and dramatic change at the high school came as a result of a decision to reassign ninth-grade students from the middle school to the high school. In 1994, a major building project added a new auditorium, athletic facility, and enough new classrooms to allow the addition of approximately 400 ninth-grade students to the high school. Over the last several years, enrollment increases district-wide have added even more students to the high school, which currently houses almost 1,800 students. This rapid growth, coupled with the building's unwieldy size, has resulted in focused and sustained efforts to personalize the management and instruction of the high school students, and to insure efficient communication among the roughly 120 teachers and support staff.

The recent growth in the school population is described by teachers who are also former students.

> *When I was a student, there were 1,100 students in this building, three grades. We're at 1,800 now, with four grades. We're projected in five years to be at 2,200. The growth has been amazing, and there are new houses going up still and new developments in the planning. I don't see the community building a second high school either. I'm afraid this place is going to look like one of those trails for hamsters because we're going to [continue to grow].* – A teacher/former student
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> *I did all my high school years here at Reynoldsburg High School. I came back here and did student teaching, and then got a job here teaching and have been here 27 years; and am going to be buried under the Raider Rock when I die. I've seen a lot. When I was here we had about 200 in the graduating class, and we're now up around 350 in the graduating class. … I think with a lot of public housing and those types of things, that we've had a lot of influx of people from inner city moving out into the suburban areas.* – A teacher/former student
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> *We have over 100 teachers now. Five years ago we had 56. So our staff is twice as large, twice as many at least, maybe 50 times as many in those special area projects that you need to deal with. The biggest change in this school has been the enormous growth.* – A teacher
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> *Size is an inhibitor. … I still wish that we had, instead of adding to this high school, built a second school. Because I think two schools of 900 would just be a lot better than one school of 1,800.* – A teacher

At the same time that the school was dealing with increased numbers of students and staff, a change occurred in the principal's position. The principal, who had directed the school in its early years of reform, left the high school to pursue an advanced degree, and a new principal was hired. The change in leadership corresponded with the growth in the student and teaching population. The district was careful in its selection of a successor. The school district wanted to hire a person who understood the improvement initiatives implemented by the principal and staff at Reynoldsburg High School and who would take advantage of those initiatives in order to further improve the high school in the years ahead. The current principal remembers his initial introduction to Reynoldsburg:

> *The year I came, they were under this configuration, 9-12, previously they were 10-12. They had only been under this configuration, 9-12, for a year.... So we're coping now with the notion of 1,800 kids under one roof. Which is significant. There is so much research out there on student performance directly correlated with the size of schools. We know that small schools tend to serve kids better. And yet it's contrary to what took place in the '60s, '70s, and '80s as we consolidated districts.... Suddenly you have these enormously large high schools of 2,000 to 4,000 kids. We're coping with that within the mechanism of change, as well as other demographic variables in our community.* – Current principal

The former principal believes that the transition in leadership went smoothly. "I tried to listen, and I think listening is probably the most important piece. I thought [the current principal] did that well in his first year of coming in and listening and trying to feel the place out before you try anything real dramatic." One of the current teachers agrees:

> *When [the former principal] was here, we ran the school. He'd say, "What do you think?" And so when [the current principal] came, for a year, he didn't say anything. He let us just keep running the show. He just watched us, and he was really very much in agreement with what we were doing. He didn't add anything or change anything, which was a smart move on his part.* – A teacher

Another teacher reflects on the transition period and describes the emphasis of the new principal.

> *When [the former principal] was here, the focus was more on what kids were doing at the moment. How can we help the kid while we have them? I think the difference now is that we're not only focused on what we do with the kid while we have him, but what is the kid going to take with him when he leaves us. To me it made more sense. I don't know what the catalyst was that caused the shift of focus. So many things happened about the same time. [The current principal] came on board, that was part of it. When the new building opened, when the new construction was in use and all of a sudden we were physically bigger, as well as it was trying to maintain that physical size along with the population size, along with having freshmen in the building, so we were even that much bigger. I honestly*

> *don't know what the spark was to lead us into the conversation. I think a lot of it had to do with [the current principal]. I think he brought that on.* – A teacher

As the new principal has worked with the staff to maintain continuity while beginning new conversations and meeting new challenges, one source of constancy and stability was the school's continued association with the Coalition of Essential Schools.

The Coalition of Essential Schools

> ***The Coalition of Essential Schools is everything that I always wanted to do and be, but didn't have a name. Student-as-learner, teacher-as-coach has helped me an awful lot.***

The principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools have been a major influence on the school-improvement initiatives being taken at Reynoldsburg High School. The original nine principles are:

1. *Intellectual Focus* — The primary focus of school is to help adolescents learn to use their minds well.
2. *Simple Goals* — Each student should master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. The aphorism *less is more* should permeate curricular thought. Student mastery and achievement versus content coverage.
3. *Universal Goals* — The school's goals should apply to all students.
4. *Personalization* — Teaching and learning should be personalized. A teacher should not have direct responsibility for more than 80 students.
5. Student-as-worker — The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker and teacher-as-coach.
6. *Diploma by Exhibition* — Diplomas should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery. Abolish the notion of credits earned for time spent. Graduation is contingent upon mastery and exhibition.
7. *Tone* — The school should self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation ("*I won't threaten you, but I expect much of you.*"), of trust (until abused), and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity, and tolerance). Parents should be treated as collaborators.
8. *Staff* — The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (scholars in general education) and specialists second (expert in one particular discipline).

9. *Budget* — Administrative and budget targets should include an 80:1 student-teacher ratio, substantial collective planning time for teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per pupil cost not to exceed traditional schools by more than 10 percent.

A tenth principle was added during the 1997-98 school year:

10. *Democracy* — The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strengths of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity.

In addition to Reynoldsburg High School, Ohio high schools which are members of the coalition include Federal Hocking High School (Athens County), Gilmore Academy (Gates Mills), Independence High School (Columbus), Parma High School, and Cincinnati Woodward High School.

During the initial stages of implementation, the $96,000 grant awarded to Reynoldsburg by the Ohio Department of Education made it possible for faculty members to receive formal training in Coalition principles and practices at Brown University. More recently, Coalition principles have been communicated both formally and informally through interaction with staff members who have had training, and through experience with the teaching practices that are reflective of the Coalition philosophy. One teacher describes his experience with the formal training.

> *We had the great chance as a team the summer before we started to go to Brown University and spend the week, particularly with the nine principles, and deciding as a group which ones, if any, we could buy into and really explore. We looked at three or four in particular that we thought would be useful. We introduce those principles to the students and parents at the beginning of the school year, and tell them that this is basically what we look at on a daily basis when we're deciding our curriculum and what we're going to do with the students.* – A teacher

A teacher who did not receive formal training expresses equal enthusiasm for his experience with certain selected Coalition Principles:

> *The absence of formal training may have turned out to be a blessing, because what it enabled us to do was to take a set of guiding principles, read what had been written about those principles, and come together as a team and wrestle with those ideas. We had these things on our walls. We did a lot of reading. It's been an important source of ideas, and of resources, and of networking for me. In terms of the principles and guiding philosophy, I think it's been useful for our staff. When we formed our team, we focused on four of the principles as the basis of how we did our work — personalization, student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach, and demonstration of mastery of performance.* – A teacher

The school superintendent endorses the use of Coalition Principles at the high school, and he emphasizes the importance of making the school an inviting place to be.

> *I think that we have high school kids that certainly are not excited about learning, they're not excited about being in high school, they're not excited about life. So part of that with the Coalition is to have kids interact, to understand that learning just doesn't occur in school, and what does occur in school has some relationship to real life. I'd like kids to be excited about coming, whether it's at the high school building, or whether it's an alternative school. The second thing is, are they learning anything? Do they have the core knowledge in order to move forward to use that excitement and energy to be successful? I don't think that we talk about the basic knowledge skills, writing, math, enough in the secondary schools in relationship to real life.* – District superintendent

Many of the teachers agree with him, and they point to the most commonly employed principles as examples of the impact that the Coalition of Essential Schools has had on Reynoldsburg High School. "The coalition is a way of working with kids, a way of interacting with students, a model of how I should present myself to kids and vice-versa — personalization, student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach."

> *I think those nine principles should be the focus. Anything that you're thinking of doing you can plug it into one of those nine ideas and shape it from there. I think it's a pretty good shopping list in terms of organizing what you want to do.* – A teacher

Yet another teacher credits the coalition for influencing several specific programs at the high school. "I think it's really been a driving force for all of our initial reforms, like the double-blocking, more personalization, more student-directed learning, and all that. In that sense it's been a huge impact on our school."

Formal training regarding the Coalition of Essential Schools, and even the implementation of coalition principles at Reynoldsburg High School, is strictly voluntary. No teacher is required to accept or employ coalition-endorsed practices. As a result, some members of the Reynoldsburg faculty are unclear about its purpose or application. Several faculty members expressed that they were unsure about its use.

> *On my team I think the Coalition means a lot more, because our team is structured around five of the nine common principles from the coalition and we try to gear the way our team runs around those five principles. But once you get out of our team, I think that it's sporadic. I think that we've lost some of our focus with the coalition. I think as we've hired new people, we've not done a good job of orienting them to the Coalition and the processes that we've gone through and what started everything seven years ago, what got us to where we are now, and what changes have occurred since then. I don't see other people thinking and reflecting in terms of the coalition.* – A teacher

"I'm not as familiar with the Coalition as some others," said another teacher. This teacher feels that discussions about Coalition principles are not conducted as frequently as they had been in prior years. "I honestly don't know that much about it. [Its goal seems to be to] improve education by non-traditional means — double-blocking, dyads, grading-in-pencil. When [the former principal] was here, he talked about it more."

There are teachers at the high school who do not view the Coalition Principles as having any measurable influence on the structure of their classrooms. One such teacher says,"I don't worry about that as long as I feel like I'm preparing my students for life in general and helping them make a choice. I don't think I could tell you what those principles are."

There are also some on the staff who are skeptics. These teachers see the Coalition Principles as overly concerned with socialization and processing skills at the expense of a focus on rigorous content-based standards. In their opinion, the school should be more accepting of traditional teaching practices, which are aimed at equipping students with the knowledge they will need for more advanced levels of formal education.

> *I think it's probably mostly good for bringing kids up from lower levels to competence, but I think it works against intellectualism. I think it puts so much emphasis on the masses that it doesn't leave much for the kids who want to excel and, in fact, need to excel.* – A teacher

These philosophical rifts are by no means uncommon in coalition schools. Muncy and McQuillan (1996) found such divisions in many of the schools they studied and, likewise, they discovered that all their study schools were "somehow changed as a consequence of this collective reflection about whether current practices were in students' best interests" (p. 18).

In spite of the reservations held by some teachers, the principles espoused by the Coalition of Essential Schools are the basis for many of the instructional emphases and educational goals of Reynoldsburg High School. But the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools are more philosophical guides than methodological descriptions. Converting those philosophies into programs and practices was not a quick or easy task.

> *The philosophy would be getting kids ready for the world. I think that's what has sparked a lot of it, and I think that's always our goal. ... However, now we have to get our actions to follow that belief. ... I guess that would be the underlying philosophy. What is driving everything is getting us to that goal, but we need to get our actions now to reflect that philosophy.* – A teacher

Early discussions about the principles centered on the best ways to operationalize and transform them into some kind of definable practices. The former principal talks about those discussions.

> *Citizenship, effective thinking, global understanding, tone of trust and decency, and communication skills: We organized in that fashion and began to [ask], How do you measure citizenship? How do you measure effective thinking? How do you measure our global understanding? How do you measure a tone of trust and decency? How do you measure communication skills in the school?* – Former principal

Coalition Principles may be operationalized in different ways in different schools, but foremost among the coalition-related practices which emerged at Reynoldsburg High School are a school philosophy which emphasizes choice; personalization efforts to make a large school seem smaller; an authentic instruction model which features the "student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach" philosophy; master schedule options which include double-blocked class periods; the grouping of teachers and students into interdisciplinary grade-level teams; student performance assessment by exhibition; and an ongoing emphasis on professional development.

Student and Teacher Choice

The school is trying to become more student-centered, giving the students more choices in course selection and in alternative ways of learning.

As the staff of Reynoldsburg High School discussed the best approaches to school improvement in their building, they targeted a learner-centered atmosphere which permits students as much choice as possible in course selection, instructional delivery, and approaches to learning. The result has been a master schedule that includes both single-blocked and double-blocked periods; courses which feature either independent research or lectures; opportunities to take Advanced-Placement courses or courses offered through post-secondary options at the university; and an arena scheduling process which gives students as much input in course selection as possible.

Much of what Reynoldsburg High School has done in the way of school improvement has been dependent on adjustments in the master schedule. The emphasis that the school wants to place on student and teacher choice, for example, requires that the master schedule allow as many options as possible in regard to course selection, instructional format, and teacher selection. Another example would be the school's goal to personalize the large-school setting. Personalization means smaller class size, small-group planning time for teachers, and opportunities for teaming. Both of these goals, as well as others, are met through scheduling options that include some classes which are double-blocked. These classes are twice as long as other classes in the schedule, taking two consecutive periods of the seven instructional periods allotted for each day.

> *I was a pioneer in this double-block thing. I remember at a teachers' meeting, [the former principal] said, "What if I gave you the opportunity to have your kids for two periods in*

> *a row, every day for a semester? Who would try it?" My hand went up in the air and I thought, "Baby immersion! Baby immersion!" So I just jumped in with both feet. [My colleague] said she would love to do it too. We just thought we'd give it a whirl, and when we go to present places they say, "Who trained you?" and we say, "We did." I was already doing lots of multiple activities. I just had to find new ways to make things weave beautifully, so that yesterday's lesson and today's lesson now were like one lesson. I just loved it.* – A teacher

Many teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the traditional 45-minute teaching period. Teachers who felt this way were frustrated by the time constraints that such a teaching block presented. In their view, the traditional class period was just too short to accommodate the daily process of review, introduction of new material, practice, and homework assignment.

> *I picked the double-blocking out of frustration .... You say to the class, "Are there any questions about the previous day's assignment?" If it took you a long time to get through the previous day, you'll barely get through the discussion of what's new, and then the bell rings. Now we can't let them go without giving them an assignment, so you give them one even though you know they are going to struggle. Well the next day now, this treadmill you're on is getting a little vicious. I thought if we had more time so that we could actually start something and finish it, it would be wonderful. The thing you do have to do is vary the activity that's going on. You do a little bit at the board, you do some at your seat, you have kids work together — you go back and forth.* – A teacher

Double-blocking also seemed to provide a way for some teachers to facilitate more group work among the students. The extra time each day allows for the development of group discussion and the expansion and exploration of ideas.

> *I think what kids are finding is that they are expected to work together more. Part of that stems from the conversation that we had with the business people and the college people where they are expecting their employees to work together. I think that sparked some of that. I think more and more it's double-blocked classes where there is the extended time to put kids together in a collaborative group and work to solve a problem and get to its natural end within that amount of time. ... When I do my collaboration on the team that I'm on, is when I'm in a double-blocked setting. It's difficult to do when I'm single-blocked, when I only have the kids from 45 to 50 minutes. When our team double-blocks, I can do more of that, I can put them in pairs, or in threes, or fours.... When time is allowed to be extended, the kids have that opportunity more.* – A teacher

Those teachers who advocate double-blocked classes feel that they need to do less review and that they have more time to introduce and develop new information.

> *I know some of the reservations on double-block classes is that you can't get through all the material, and I've found just the opposite to be true. We almost always get through more concepts and at greater depth. We have time that I can spend with them and make sure that they have those concepts before they go home and finish up their homework. We don't have to spend as much review time the next day. It's all taken care of in one day. You can teach related concepts in one day because you have time to do that. They can see connections.* – A teacher

Students who take double-blocked classes can complete a year-long course in only a semester. One school administrator calls attention to the advantages of accelerated learning for those students who want to move quickly through a sequence of courses:

> *I see that double-blocking allows kids the options. ... You can take Spanish I double-blocked first semester and Spanish II double-blocked second semester, and you have met your college articulation requirements. It's keeping those doors open. You've also got a child who picks up quickly on things and is ready to move quickly through a curriculum to get to a higher level. Those double-blocking classes in math and science allow them to do that, even if they didn't start with Algebra I in eighth grade.* – An administrator

A related advantage is that many students who are able to gain full course credit in one semester tend to go on and take additional advanced courses more readily.

> *Probably over half of the kids in my class would not have been taking a fourth-year math had we not put a block in the schedule. I have to think that's good. Whether they get As or Ds, to me really doesn't make a difference. It's the fact that they're trying it, they're getting the experience before they get to the college level.* – A teacher

Another advantage is the relaxed atmosphere and the opportunity for extended personal interaction that extra-long periods present.

> *It gave me the chance to know my kids better. There is more personalization — more one on one. I mean, you actually get to know their personalities. There's a new atmosphere in the classroom that's not there sometimes in a singleton. They get to know each other and they're real comfortable and if someone screws up, it's okay. It's more like a family. I was always pretty stressed in a singleton, because you walked in and, by the time they settled, you looked to see who's not there, you scribble down absences. The day before you didn't really get the whole lesson introduced because the bell rang and you threw homework at them that they really couldn't do well, but you expected them to try. It was like a terrible cycle that was never over. Now I can introduce something, practice it four different ways, play a game, a zillion things can happen in a double-block class that couldn't happen in a singleton.* – A teacher

"You seem to almost work together more like a family," says a student, "because you're there for two hours, and you do lots of group work and talk to everybody."

Teachers do point to disadvantages as well as to the benefits. One of the perceived disadvantages is for the students who do not perform well in traditional single-period classes. These students may have even greater obstacles to overcome in double-blocked periods.

> *If somebody has poor attendance, double-blocking is a killer. ... I'm really glad that Reynoldsburg offers single- and double-blocking, because I think there are some students who think they function better in a single block. There are students [whom] double-blocking overloads with too much information at one time. About 70 percent of the students could function in a double-block or single-block class equally well. There probably are about 30 percent that would be better off in a single-block class.* – A teacher

Double-blocking also requires increased preparation time for teachers. This can be a problem if the teacher has never taught the course before or if the teacher is inexperienced.

> *I guess there's one other time that I think single-blocking is really good. I'm teaching an enriched pre-calculus class which I haven't taught since 1979, and I'm really glad that one is single-blocked because that allows me the opportunity to make sure the lesson plans flow a little more continuously. It's a lot easier to plan for one day, and make sure that it flows real well, than to plan for a double-block. I mean, if you have a double-block that isn't good, or have poor planning, then it's a nightmare. I don't know if I would put a new teacher in a double-blocked class.* – A teacher

The long-term goal of the scheduling process is to allow students to choose any course in either a single-blocked or double-blocked format. Although this goal meets the criterion of student choice, it also means that teachers will have to learn how to teach in both formats. Those teachers who are happy with the single-block approach are apprehensive about moving to a double-blocked format. They see it as consistent with the school's emphasis on new and innovative practices, but not necessarily consistent with an emphasis on preparing students for higher education.

A teacher of Advanced-Placement classes fears that she will be less effective in a double-blocked format and she is resistant to the idea:

> *Now they throw it open and say you can sign up for anything single-blocked, double-blocked, whatever you want. OK, that's fine. So somebody can sign up for my advanced course double-blocked. Do I get to staple a little note onto their AP [Advanced Placement] test — "Please excuse my students for not knowing quite as much as they have in the past because we had to double-block advanced course and we couldn't really cover quite as much as we normally cover. Please excuse my students and bump their scores up a point or two*

> *anyway." I'll staple that on their ACTs and SATs too — that I wasn't able to do quite as much writing, quite as much vocabulary, they haven't read quite as much because they double-block. "So please excuse their SAT or ACT score for being a little lower, but we're in an experimental school."* – An advanced-placement teacher

Almost all teachers and administrators agree that double-blocking requires teachers to make adjustments in the way they teach. Some see these adjustments as facilitating positive change and leading toward the school's goal of active, learner-centered classrooms.

> *One of the characteristics of successful double-blocking is that no teacher can successfully carry on a double-block and lecture for 110 minutes. The strongest feature of double-blocking is that it's got to be hands-on. It means the teachers have to change their methodology and how they are going to deliver education to students. I think that for kids, double-blocking is providing them the opportunity to have practice and repetition. I think that double-blocking has changed the way teachers deliver education.* – An administrator

Not all teachers are interested in making these adjustments, however, especially if they are satisfied with their effectiveness in a single-blocked format. Other teachers may be willing to try the new approach, but are not good at teaching an extended period. The effect is a significant variance in the responses to double-blocked classes by students.

> *I took two science courses, double-blocked. It was with the same teacher. It was a major mistake in my high school career. The class period consisted of taking notes off the overhead for one full period, then you may get a break, and then you sit down for another whole period and do the book work.* – A student

> *I had two years at block scheduling and I absolutely loved it. There's nothing like having three or four classes a day and having an hour and a half in each class approximately. Like in math class, you would start a lesson, she would teach, you would have time to work on it. Then she would teach another lesson. We were in the classroom and have homework and, if you had questions, they could be answered right there. With reports and stuff, if you only have four classes, it's extremely easy to keep on top of things.* – A student

> *"I don't like it at all. It's like they teach so fast. I'm in pre-calculus double-blocking. We were on a new subject today and we just started a new one yesterday. Nobody gets it.* – A student

> *I have to say I like it. With a double-blocked period, they give you your work, and then you get your time when you can go up and ask questions. You have time to really get a feel how to do the work, and I know that I didn't feel rushed, and it made it a lot easier.* – A student

The conclusion drawn by students and teachers alike is that the effectiveness of double-blocking depends to a great extent on the teacher.

> *I think it's right for every student, but I don't think it's right for every teacher. Because if the teacher isn't devoted and sure what he/she is doing, to make this a successful time, then it's going to be a real detriment for students. Better you should have only 50 minutes and get them out the door than kill them with 100 minutes of boredom. I hated losing them after just a couple minutes, because you barely get this idea planted and then someone uproots them. I've seen a lot of improvement in kids — in their language, in their speaking, in their writing. This is not meant for a lecture format. Maybe it was meant for me. I involve the students more. I'm not so much the teacher in the center — I walk around and I try to give new perspectives to things. We have enough time in the scope of a day to really get down what needs to happen.* – A teacher of double-blocked classes

> *I have some teachers that I couldn't stand to be in the room with for two hours. And yet there are ones that you love to death, and you would like to go back to elementary school and have them all day for everything. It depends on who else is in your class, like your friends and stuff. It just depends on the whole environment of everything.* – A student

The high school's commitment to student and teacher choice may be the answer to the effective use of double-blocked classes by the faculty.

> *I've only taken two classes that were double-blocked: Spanish and Algebra II. I liked Algebra II. Granted, I had more homework every night, but we got done in a half a year. I think you should keep it, but I don't think you should be forced to take it. It's your decision how fast you can learn. But there are things like Spanish where you need the time. It all depends on your preference.* – A student

The principal acknowledges that students may not always make the best choices, and that the school has a responsibility to provide guidance and direction as students go through the course-selection process, but he believes that giving students the freedom to make as many of their own choices as possible builds a sense of ownership and responsibility within the student body.

> *We have deliberately chosen the path of student choice. I can say we're trying to empower kids as much as we empower staff through the years here. And that's just been a fairly recent phenomenon. You can look at such a silly thing like arena scheduling, which is not a new concept … and yet it speaks volumes to the culture of the building. We are, in fact, saying to kids that you are empowered to make choices. … One of the things coming out of our school improvement process will be some sort of formal advisee/advisor program in some fashion. I remain skeptical that all of our kids are making the best choices that they could possibly make. But with choice comes some degree of ownership [of] responsibility, as*

> . *we all know. It's been kind of a hallmark, the way we go about scheduling, the delivery style that is imbedded into what we do with double-blocking, or single-blocking, or integrative coursework, or those kinds of things.* – Current principal

Choice is a goal for teachers as well as students. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate coalition principles into their instructional methods, but the school has not mandated that all teachers conform. The former principal felt that it was important to acknowledge that many different teaching approaches can be effective and that teachers who were successful were not targets of the school's emphasis on alternative forms of instruction.

> *...It takes all kinds of teaching to give kids all kinds of experiences, and there are some of [the teachers] that have always taught very well and continue to teach very well; and we're not messing with [those teachers].* – Former principal

The right of teachers to choose their own methods of instruction is an important consideration and the teachers at Reynoldsburg share that concern. There are prominent and well-respected teachers at the school who have not incorporated team-teaching, assessment by exhibition, cooperative learning, or other coalition-related practices. Some of these teachers believe, however, that certain instructional methods which are seen as sympathetic to coalition principles receive undue recognition and endorsement from school administrators. These teachers see an inappropriate bias toward teaching methods which feature group work and independent study. They fear that the balance between traditional instructional approaches and reform-based methods is too heavily weighted on the reform side.

> *I don't want to say to you here [that] every classroom should be formed like [my] classroom, but sometimes I get the feeling that there are people who are saying, "I want to clone everything the way the reform model works." I don't think it works in our high school.*
> – A teacher

In addition, some teachers feel that the emphasis placed on student choice is incompatible with a solid, professional assessment of what a student should learn at Reynoldsburg High School. One teacher contrasts the importance of choice with the importance of learning by saying, "... Student choice is all important. I thought student learning was most important. ...That's a good way to shrug off any responsibility." Another teacher agrees that student empowerment may work against the students' best interests academically. "I think that we've gotten away from education, and we've gotten more into the individual person and empowering kids. We've given our kids an awful lot of freedoms."

One prominent way in which the high school expresses its commitment to student choice is in its scheduling process. The former computer-based approach to scheduling was replaced with an arena scheduling process that allows students to select their own courses and to choose which teachers they would prefer to teach those courses. The students choose the period and the teacher and whether they want double-block or single block. Their schedules can be complete in June rather than August.

In a large school like Reynoldsburg, arena scheduling distributed some of the responsibility for guiding students toward appropriate courses, easing the pressure on the guidance department, and allowing classroom teachers to share in the advising process. Part of the reason for choosing arena scheduling is the large number of schedule changes that inevitably resulted from the traditional scheduling methods.

> *Arena scheduling was a plea from the guidance department and administration, saying what we're doing is not working. It's a mess and we need help fixing it. The poor guidance counselors, I don't know how they did it..... In the first six weeks of school there were 2,000 schedule changes. ... We're three weeks into the year before most people had a working schedule. The first day of school we found kids that didn't have a schedule and we said, "Go home; we might have one for you tomorrow." That's how they started the school year.*
> – A teacher

Most importantly, however, arena scheduling is a way of operationalizing the school's commitment to choice. The intent is to allow students to take responsibility for their own decisions and then, on the basis of those decisions, hold them accountable for the consequences. Says one staff member, "The arena scheduling has really cemented choice with the kids. If you give kids informed choices, they're going to make good choices, and then you can hold them accountable for their choices."

> *I like that they have a choice, because there is someone who wouldn't teach like I teach. Whatever that person feels comfortable with is fine with me, and I know that different students learn in different ways and teachers are probably more effective in different ways.*
> – A teacher

The system allows first choice to students in the school's Renaissance program, an honor's organization for students with good grades, good attendance, and a clean discipline record. Upperclass students receive preference over underclassmen, and students taking advanced placement courses are also afforded priority status. Those students that don't fit into one or more of those categories inevitably must deal with some disappointment.

> *Last year I wanted to take a double-blocked class but I couldn't, and now it's something that I'll have to take next year because they couldn't fit it into my schedule this year. I don't think it's fair for them to do it by grades. I know the upperclassmen have been here longer. It's like we're being punished for being younger. They're saying [that] just because you're younger, you can't take these certain classes.* – A student

Students don't always like it, but they also understand that no system is perfect, and they appreciate the effort, even when the system doesn't work in their favor.

> *I really liked it, because it's preparing you for college. I'm going to have to do this in the summer, go to a big college. I will be shut out of classes. It's teaching me to have alternative schedules. I thought it gave us a lot of freedom and I really liked that. I liked getting to choose what I wanted, when I wanted it. I thought it was pretty beneficial for the future.* – A student

Personalization

Teachers discover that they need to develop and maintain personal relationships and that for most students meaningful interaction is a precursor to academic learning. (Fullan and Steigelbauer, 1991, p. 27)

In writing about the focus of school improvement efforts, Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991) indicate that the personal dimension of relationships between and among the students and teachers often gets too little attention, considering its evident importance to student academic achievement. They write:

> *The majority of curriculum innovations are directed at cognitive/academic goals rather than personal/social-development goals. The former are more concrete, easier to implement and measure, and probably more elitist (academic) in their consequences. Individual, interpersonal, and social attitudes and skills appropriate for a democratic society do not receive the equal attention that [John] Dewey (1916) so clearly argued they should, and that the rhetoric of formal goal statements of schools and government implies. For example, the major current emphasis on basic skills and factual knowledge may be preempting the rest of the curriculum, including higher order cognitive skills. Moreover, it may be leading to the almost wholesale neglect of personal and social-development goals.* (p. 27).

If the balance between personal-social and cognitive-academic goals is not properly addressed in other schools, it would be hard to suggest that the faculty and staff of Reynoldsburg High School have not given it proper attention. The former principal remembers being impressed by the importance of a personalized school atmosphere beginning with his first exposure to Sizer's opinions.

> *Personalization made sense. I can remember four, five, six years in a row, that kids would walk across that stage in June, and I'm eyeball to eyeball with them ready to shake their hand, and I'm wondering if I've ever seen this kid before. There's something wrong with that. I didn't ever pretend that I could know each kid personally, but I felt that once I got into this mode, … it was my responsibility to design the high school in such a way that at least one adult knew every kid well; that I couldn't know them all, but it was my responsibility that adults knew kids well.* – Former principal

The school superintendent backs that opinion:

> *I think that is the one thing that I liked about the Coalition Principles. It struck me as creating the team of houses was an attempt to try to personalize education again to groups of 100 kids and reacquaint or reattach parents to the public schools and the high school situation.* – District superintendent

As the school has grown in size, the danger that students and teachers alike would be caught in a large, impersonal bureaucracy increased. As a result, making a large school feel like a small one continues to be a goal at Reynoldsburg High School. The principal believes that personalization will be as big a concern in the future as it has been in the past.

> *When you ask me the question, "Where do I see Reynoldsburg High School in two years?" I see us as a smaller place. Not in terms of physical spaces, because, in fact, we just received a nice little check from the state for construction. We're going to be adding 14 classrooms to this building and expanding our cafeteria. So we are, in fact, going to be a much larger place. We're peaking about 2,000, 2,100 kids probably. ... To have 2,100 kids in the same building just is not the way it used to happen. But thoughtfully we have to look at houses; we have to look at making a big school smaller; we have to look at charters; we have to look at schools within schools, although the research is a lot more vague about schools within schools, in terms of student performance and things like that.* – Current principal

A teacher expresses a similar opinion about maintaining these efforts to keep the school a familiar and comfortable setting for everyone.

> *I think that is something that we really look at in this school., It was a goal when we started the whole reform package here, to try and make Reynoldsburg a smaller school. I was talking to [the current and the former principals] and said we have to start that whole process over again. I think we really had made the school smaller, but we have so many new people that our reforms couldn't keep up with it.* – A teacher

Some early ideas about personalizing the building looked promising in theory but didn't work out as well as expected when put into practice. One example is an advocacy homeroom.

> *The greatest use of support staff was a couple of years ago, when we tried to do an advocacy homeroom situation where the custodians had their own homeroom; secretaries had their own homeroom; administrators had their own homeroom kids. We met in homeroom every day for about 10 minutes for announcements and distributing anything that needed to come out of the administrative office, as well as just it's one teacher to touch base with every single day. It was neat. But the teachers weren't using it right. It was at a bad place in the day, there was no accountability for kids who came late to homeroom, nothing*

> *was happening, so homeroom was dissolved. ... I think in a small school it would be much more effective. It would be easier to maintain and operationalize. It was the very first thing at the beginning of the day. Now we open with the first period.* – A teacher

Teachers recognize the sudden change in student population brought about by the introduction of ninth graders to the building and by general population growth in the district; and they see this increase in size as a threat to their efforts to properly care for their students. The population growth was so sudden that many experienced teachers were unprepared for the change. Within a short time, the regular contact between members of the faculty was gone and the building was filled with many new faces. The personalization principle espoused by the coalition, therefore, had a natural appeal for many members of the staff.

The school superintendent recognizes the dangers in operating a single large high school in a school district which has experienced dramatic growth. He realizes that personalizing such a large building is not an easy thing to do.

> *When you have a single high school with 1,800 students, ... it cannot, just because of its size, be efficient or effective for all the students. I had a mentor when I was at Bowling Green [when] I used to bug ...about what was the ideal size high school. He said a high school of the ideal size is one that needs all of its students in order to be successful. Even with 1,800 or 2,000 students, that's what you have to look for. I think it's much, much more difficult with a large high school to do that than with the smaller high school.* – District superintendent

Another teacher reflects on her teaching experience in another high school which was larger than Reynoldsburg's, and says that Reynoldsburg is doing a better job of keeping a warm, personal atmosphere.

> *I keep referring to my old school. It's up to 3,000 students I think now.... But I only knew the math and science department, that's it. I wasn't close to anybody else. Here it's more like a family. You just sit down at the lunch and eat with the librarian, and a science and a history teacher. I feel like this is more of a family-oriented community.* – A teacher

The teachers realize that Reynoldsburg High School is not the only large high school, or even among the very largest high schools in the state, but they believe that it is large enough to warrant special efforts to individualize wherever possible Efforts to personalize the school have been addressed primarily through the formal grouping of teachers and students into teams — primarily at the freshman and sophomore level — but there have been informal approaches as well. One teacher describes his experience with students on a fishing trip.

> *It was one of the custodians and myself who met with some kids. We met once a month through the winter. I'm a fly fisherman, so we'd tie down all the flies one week; they made their own lures. When the weather broke, we'd go fishing. And we started out the first year with about 15 or 16 kids in grades 10 through 12. But one of the things that I did each time we went was to ask a guest teacher to come with us. Most of the kids who fished with us, they're not going to take physics. [Another teacher] was showing them how to cast and everything else. Those kids got a whole different view of [him]. [A second teacher] went with us. [She] didn't fish and wasn't going to fish. But she brought her folding chair and a book, and she sat and read her book, and then the kids started catching fish, and the next thing I know she whips out a camera and she's taking pictures of all these kids and just [became] involved with them. One kid going home in my van said, "I didn't know [that teacher] was so much fun. I thought that she just taught math." Eventually we were up to35 kids.* – A teacher

One of the more important formal approaches to personalization in the district was initiated independent of the Coalition Principles by the school superintendent. He talks about the genesis of his own personal emphasis on personal relations.

> *I was going to a state basketball tournament and one of our football players came up to me and said, "It's good to see you here." As he walked away, four or five of high school peers made fun of him for being polite to the superintendent. That kind of gnawed at me a little bit. So I started talking about it when I went out talking to the community. I said, "What kinds of standards and what kinds of expectations are we setting for kids, or do kids have, that being polite to adults is ridiculed?" People kind of reacted to that, so we had a group come together and start talking about values, respect, and citizenship, and we met with about 250 people from the community the first year and we spun off some action plans.*
> – District superintendent

The result of this community-based examination of personal relations is now known as the Reynoldsburg Compact. Among those who had a part in developing this document are the police chief, mayor, building principals, union president, superintendent, Chamber of Commerce president, and ministerial association. It reads:

The Reynoldsburg Compact

As a member of the Reynoldsburg Community I will show my strength by

- *greeting others I meet with acts of friendship and kindness,*
- *taking responsibility for my own actions and how they affect the people and environment around me,*

- *being truthful and honest to myself and others in all that I say and do as a sign of respect for myself and others,*
- *treating all persons in ways that I would like them to treat me, and*
- *recognizing that each person is different and has an individual contribution to make to the community.*

The Reynoldsburg Compact is now displayed on school publications and in prominent places in school buildings and around the school district.

> *This compact was drawn up and talked about, and we had it ratified by the members and you can see on the wall it was signed by the participants that helped draw it up. We have it placed in a good many of our businesses, in the Chamber of Commerce. If you go up to city hall and you walk up the steps you'll see a plaque that has this. You'll see this in classrooms throughout the district. If you go into the elementary classes, you'll see the respect document signed by students and parents. I understand that most of the parents have one at home. If a student gets in trouble, we talk about their commitment and responsibility to the compact. We had some junior high students and high school students that were very instrumental in drawing up and involved with the compact. We're getting ready for the third phase, where I will be speaking and offering more challenges of what we should be doing with the compact if we really believe it instead of just having it as a memento on the wall; trying to make it more alive — hopefully greeting every new resident to Reynoldsburg personally. Then ask them to do something for the community.* – District superintendent

The Reynoldsburg Compact is a prominent example of the efforts that the Reynoldsburg schools, and Reynoldsburg High School in particular, make to connect with parents and other district residents. The intent is to build relationships that extend beyond the formal roles assumed by members of the school community and to view one another from a personal perspective. One teacher cites the years of increased enrollment as a reason for growing community involvement with the school.

> *I would go back to the year that this building was opened, the new part. The community's eye was focused in this direction. That's when a stronger relationship with the community started to develop. We were in the middle of preparing for a new teacher contract; we were looking at a levy coming up within the next couple of years; we were looking at a brand new building opening; we were looking at transition of administrators, as well as starting to bring business people in to talk about focusing on the future. I really think that it's the culmination of those things all happening, when the spotlight was turned on the high school, which caused community members to be a part of what was going on here.* – A teacher

The school superintendent seems to be aware of this important element in personalizing the high school and the school district. He is an advocate of maintaining small-town values and relationships in a large-city setting. Born and raised in a small town, he hasn't forgotten how valuable community involvement can be to a school.

> *Have you ever seen the movie Hoosiers? You talk about a town meeting! Even something as trite as deciding who's going to be the basketball coach; the community got together — if you remember in that movie, they actually decided. There are some things that aren't so good about that, but I think that represented pretty much a community that felt like it was their say and their decision, and they owned it. What we need to do is get back somewhat to that on some things, maybe more appropriate things than who's going to be the basketball coach. That is what is real in my background, that people come together.* – District superintendent

The current high school principal has instituted and encouraged various forms of parental participation in school programs. These include a formal parent volunteer program, attendance during student exhibitions, participation in a monthly school improvement council, and plans to institute a formal parent-teacher-student association. Parents are also invited to attend daily meetings held by teaching teams and to join in on school improvement committees. One teacher, however, indicates that this opportunity is rarely exercised.

> *... It is open for parents to be members of school improvement teams and to see the results of those. We've had parents come to a couple, but regularly, no. [The principal] put together what he calls SIC — School Improvement Council — where parents are involved in that. But that's once a month and it's a reporting out of what the teams are doing rather than getting the parents involved in the teams. Of course, at the end of every meeting, we say parents are more than welcome ... to be a part of the teams, but when the teams are meeting during school days, that leaves the parents out. Maybe six or seven parents come. We're trying to put together a parent-teacher-student association — PTSA — right now. Apparently there's a large high school PTSA down in Cincinnati that we're trying to model it off of, but we would be the first PTSA for a high school. ... That's another way for parents to get involved in the decision making and make a positive impact on the school.* – A teacher

According to many parents and students, the schools' efforts toward personalization are paying off. Two parents, speaking of their daughter's experiences at Reynoldsburg High School, expressed their satisfaction.

> *She seems to have a really good relationship with all of her teachers. When I was in school — I don't know about you, but you would be terrified to go up to the teacher, and she interacts with them. It seems like she gets a lot of attention. If she has a problem, she feels comfortable going to the teacher and saying, 'I don't understand this or that. ... Even when our son was here, and that was quite awhile ago, we had conferences with the teach-*

> *ers. We had feedback with them in trying to work with them through problems he was having. And there were people that would tutor him.* – A parent

Another set of parents agrees, saying that they were pleased by attempts to resolve a personal problem of their daughter's.

> *We had an incident last winter where her expensive calculator came up missing. I called the school. I was able to come in. I talked to the security person and I talked to the assistant principal. She put out memos and notes to teachers. The calculator didn't appear, but I felt there was an effort to find it and they were kind to us. We don't have a lot of interaction because our daughter seems to do well, and we're not getting calls asking us to come in because there's a problem. Which is wonderful. But we've always had positive experiences with everyone the times that we've been here.* – A parent

Many students also express general satisfaction with the atmosphere of the school. Although the school is large, one student feels that the teachers add the necessary personal touches.

> *It's not like there's a lot of people in a class. I'm in AP Government, and we have 46 people in the class, and that's like the biggest class I've ever had. I think it's one of the biggest classes in the high school. And the teacher still has a lot of one-on-one with us. He knows us all by name. But most other classes are pretty small and you can get a lot of attention from the teachers. At least in my experience, I've gotten a lot of attention. Teachers are very approachable.* – A student

Another student, new to Reynoldsburg High School, also feels at home with the teachers, although she notices the difference in size when the students are out in the halls.

> *My school was under 750. So making a transition from a small school where you know every single person to a bigger school — it's a culture shock. I'm not used to having so many people around. .... But I approach any teacher that I want to approach. The teacher situation doesn't bother me, but the student population does.* – A student

Yet another student sums up the accomplishments of the high school staff in the area of personalization:

> *I've gotten all the attention I need, and I get the help I need. I learn. And even though I'm going to a big school, I still think we get just as much attention as at any small school.*
> – A student

Authentic Instruction

> ***Who do you call if you want some expertise in an area? In mathematics, you say a lot of these kids who are in the advanced math class are going to be engineers. And they'll say, "What does an electrical engineer do?" "What does a mechanical engineer do?" It's like, I really don't know. That's not my experience. I haven't been an engineer, I haven't worked with an engineer to know exactly what he does day by day. So then it becomes, who can we call so that you can get that information?***

One of the coalition-related goals pursued in many of the classrooms at Reynoldsburg High School is the incorporation of *authentic* forms of instruction. These instructional approaches are termed authentic by virtue of their connection with some practical application in the world outside school — professional, business, industrial. Students in this setting are investigating business practices and participating in community service, while teachers are searching for community contacts who can bring their experiences into the classroom.

> *That's a question that I've been dealing with just for me, because I think that's important. I like the connection with the community. I see that as important — the service learning kind of thing. I think it's real valuable. You have to do inquiry. You do the research. You find out what needs to be done.* – A teacher

Another teacher explains how authentic instruction looks in her science classroom.

> *My big focus, and I'm trying to keep more of this in my curriculum as much as possible, is how does it relate to the real world — real world modeling. I took a class this summer on modeling. Are we taking data from heating some water? How does that relate? What kind of a model is that? How can you use that mathematical model to predict what's going to happen next? That type of thing. Although it's not every single lesson that I do, I try to have some kind of real world modeling in each chapter.* – A teacher

Why make these connections? Why go to the trouble of relating classroom experiences to applications in the job market?

> *That is more relevant to the times. "Now we're in an era when the individual is so empowered in terms of how they access information and how they use it. You can't deny the fact that information is available all over the place. We have to teach people to be more savvy and more thoughtful about how they interpret and understand their world.* – A teacher

Teachers operationalize the mission to make their students more savvy and more thoughtful in different ways in different classroom settings. For one mathematics teacher, it meant less dependence on the textbook and greater reliance on resources drawn from practical situations. It also meant a change in the style of her teaching.

> *I was a very traditional teacher. The seats were in rows. You came in with your book, pencil, and notebook, and you were quiet, and I'd let you know when you knew enough to talk. That changed to having tables in my classroom. We sit in groups of threes, in theater fashion. You're close enough to talk to each other. I've worked harder in the last six or seven years than I did in the first 20. But this is better. This is why I wanted to be a teacher.* – A mathematics teacher

Another teacher reports that authentic instruction had a similar effect in her classroom, and she adds that "backwards building" is an important part of the process. In this way of planning, the teacher must first think about what a student needs to know about a subject; how that knowledge needs to be applied; and then how classroom activities can be designed to reinforce the necessary knowledge and skills.

> *It's not like I don't lecture. But [authentic instruction] completely forms what I do, how I plan. I spend an incredible amount of time planning, because I go back over my stuff over and over again. Like backwards building. I put the curriculum together completely at [my previous school]. I started from scratch. I was teaching astronomy. I started with absolutely nothing. I thought, "What does a kid look like after a year of astronomy? What do they need to know? What's important?" I had to start there and build backwards from that and find things to fit in with the concepts that I want to teach. You can't take a textbook and follow it. It's an incredible amount of work, but I like it.* – A teacher

Many students like it too. One student describes her experience.

> *We've done two projects. Right now we're working on a portfolio. We choose a career. Mine is elementary education. We went to the library and researched the background of our career. Then we went out into that career and we shadowed for a day. And then we're coming back and putting together a portfolio and resume. It shows what you need to accomplish to reach that goal. I think by doing that it really helps and gives you a perspective of what you have to do to achieve your goals. I really think the school is preparing us for the future.* – A student

One way that Reynoldsburg High School sought to gain access to the best forms of authentic instruction was to establish close communication with the business community. To this end, business leaders were invited to join with school personnel in discussions about the most desirable skills and experiences for high school students.

> *... Two years ago, [the principal] and some teachers organized an inservice type thing where we met with people from different businesses and colleges.... The business leaders came in from the community and we asked the question, "What skills do you need our students to have when they enter your place of employment or your university or college or tech school? What do they need to be able to do?" We had them define them. We divided the staff in four so that we weren't all sitting with this panel of individuals. It was a smaller setting and it sparked some conversation as far as — Are we doing this, is this something that we need to do more of, how can we do this? – A teacher*

The discussions about the skills required for success in the world of business have led to a specific relationship with one business in particular. The intent is to open lines of communication so that teachers can learn from business, and business can contribute to the school.

> *We are trying to form a partnership with Honda, and we're looking at a teacher trade where Honda employees will come here and teach team building, conflict management, diversity — those types of things — and then our teachers can go to Honda, and maybe be on the line and learn some of the skills. ...Teachers for so long have been in this little bubble, little cocoon, where we're teaching what we think is important; now ...people out in business are telling us that our kids don't have the skills that they need. So we figure if we can get teachers out into business, then we can form this partnership where we can really see what the kids need and they can give us the type of feedback we need to better develop our curriculum.* – A teacher

Partly as a result of these conversations, the school has developed some specific programs which complement the approach to authentic instruction taken by many teachers in the classroom. One of these programs is the school's Mentorship Program.

> *Our mentorship program focuses the upper grades on what they want to be doing. Is it a skill that you need to go to a tech school for? If you want to be a doctor, are you gearing yourself for that? Getting them out and shadowing some people. On the team I teach on, we do an extensive unit the second semester on a lot of career exploration, working on a presentation to a person in the field that they're interested in.* – A teacher

The mentorship program is based in the home economics department and is designed to be applicable to all the students in the school.

> *What we teach in our mentorship seminar goes along with the life planning curriculum and work and family. We open the program to all students. We've had special needs students, we've had the class president, we have AP students, we have everyone. Hopefully, we'd like to see it required. I think [the principal] is for that; it's just working out all the things required. There are four of us that work in the program, so we divide the students, and stu-*

> *dents meet once a week in seminar, and then we take the students out for interviews and follow the progression of the student through the semester.* – A mentorship instructor

Perhaps the most prominent of the programs featuring authentic learning experiences is the high school's thesis program. The thesis course was developed in part to encourage independent research skills, to help students make connections with the community outside the school, and to develop independence, self-confidence, and responsibility in the student body. Students may choose between an advanced placement course and the thesis course, usually during their junior year.

The thesis class was developed by the history department with the intent of providing students a format for applying their history knowledge. It evolved from a research course known as Junior Connections. When the freshmen were transferred to the high school, the suggestion was made that this junior-level course be moved down to the freshmen year. Some teachers were opposed to that idea, saying that the course topics were relevant to a more mature high school student. A teacher describes his view at the time " '*OK*,' " I said. " 'I'll support the move to the freshmen year for our history course, but I want to make sure in its place there is a more intense upper-level history class that we require.' " The resulting new junior-level course was the thesis class. A teacher describes the course:

> *Students identify a topic; it's a culmination of their American history background, coursework, whatever. They propose an essential question and basically spend a semester trying to answer that essential question. The students can choose between a Thesis in History or a Thesis in Community Action. The difference there is that community action has an action package with it, where history does not.* – A teacher

Like many other innovations at Reynoldsburg High School, the thesis program has drawn the attention and the praise of those promoting school improvement. A teacher describes an award that the thesis program earned for the high school:

> *One of our big indicators is the thesis course. And that is totally inquiry-based. ... We received one of the two Ohio's BEST [Building Excellent Schools for Today and the 21st Century] awards for that program last year. .... Some kids are not bringing the program to as great a level as they could; others are doing fabulous jobs, but that's the nature of being a student. We require it at the junior level. You either take thesis or you take AP European history. That was one of the reasons that we got the second award at the BEST presentation; it was called Raising the Bar, because you don't have any choice. .... Something that I thought was rather interesting is since thesis came about, we had a tremendous influx of students in AP European history: And to me that says thesis is a lot harder. It's pretty good when your easy way out is an AP course.* - A teacher

The thesis course is representative of the emphasis that many teachers at Reynoldsburg High School place on the active learning process. These teachers feel that students are not often enough required to apply their knowledge in a meaningful way. One of the instructors explains:

> *I think that myself and another teacher who was part of the initial American Connections Team felt like we had a curriculum that was very survey-oriented and that students learned a lot of stuff, but never learned how to be social scientists. ... They learned a lot of history, but never learned how to think about history. I started really looking at my course and saying, "What is it about this thing? Why are we making kids take this course?" What I kept coming back to was that I was preparing kids for Jeopardy! ...There has to be more to history than this. ... Kids should take history so that they can analyze situations and make logical decisions based on evidence.* – A teacher

The students are required to gather background knowledge, but the value of the thesis program is designed to be in the use of that information.

> *We push skills. ... Thesis can't be the first social studies class. You have to bring some knowledge of American history, bring some knowledge of world history, bring some knowledge of geography to the course to make a wise choice in coming up with a question and also in understanding what's out there. But one of the things that we need to start tuning and looking at a little more is how we take this narrow concept and broaden it without losing the experience. We do that kind of in our preliminary defense.* – A teacher

Students are required to do a background paper and a preliminary defense. Some students who need to seriously revise their first attempt may be required to write a second paper. Fifteen to 20 different resources are required, drawn from books, magazines, newspapers, and the Internet.

> *Now that we are on-line in the classroom, it's unbelievable. In one period they can have six sources. They [also] have to go to the downtown library. That's really rewarding.* – A teacher

Each six-to-eight-page paper focuses on an important personality or a major historic event.

> *The assassination of Kennedy is off limits to them, because I use that as a model in class. We put Lee Harvey Oswald on trial. That is my vehicle to teach evidence and rebuttal and all that they will have to incorporate into their final thesis and presentation.* – A teacher

Projects cover a wide range of subjects. One student is spending her time on the phone contacting city administrators like the mayor and chief of police: She is trying to organize a campaign to gather food, clothes, and money for needy families in the city. A second student is doing a more traditional research project. The teacher is there as a coach, but the student is responsible for doing his/her own research.

> *I think classes like that prepare you for college, because it teaches you to do outside research on your own. You don't have a teacher there to coach you the whole time unless you have a question. It's like in a college atmosphere.* – A student

Whether describing the thesis course in particular, or authentic instruction in general, the intent is to connect classroom instruction with practical experience.

> *The thesis course is an in-depth study of a question that the student has identified, so they're going to learn some narrow but very thorough understanding of some of that history. The other part is an experience component, the experience of doing research, the experience of doing a presentation, the experience of writing a paper, the experience of interacting with the research process, the experience of defending. There are two components there — what they learn and what they experience.* – A teacher

One of the important components of the thesis course is its corresponding emphasis on authentic assessment. In order to earn a final grade, students are expected to go beyond the traditional pencil-and-paper test. They must give a live, summative presentation to a group of evaluators. When this presentation is complete, the students are asked to write a paper reflecting on their experience. One of the thesis instructors describes the process.

> *The final product is actually a thesis defense, where the students will bring in a panel of judges and sit down with them and make a presentation and field questions. I think we saw a need for students to have a culmination experience. We developed the thesis program as a kind of culmination experience. In our thesis defense night, one of the neat things to see is all of the people that come in. If you read in the students' reflective papers in community action, they are learning about the benefits of giving back to the community, and how school improvement that had become real to them. That's pretty neat.* – A thesis instructor

Parents are involved in the thesis process as well. They are expected in the audience of the defense and are even expected to be evaluators of the defense.

The final report can take several forms, and it can be completed individually or in groups. Teachers report that this experience in school has been very beneficial to Reynoldsburg graduates who have entered the job market. Every student has to get up in front of the class. Every student has to present. In one case, an honor student, an at-risk student, and a special education student teamed up to present a video they had prepared. In another instance, a deaf student stood and gave a speech to all of her classmates. After graduating, this student took sign classes in sign language and she now travels around schools to talk about what it's like to be a deaf child in a public school. Another student who was deathly afraid to stand up in front of people is now working at the Cincinnati Airport as a greeter. Yet another student went to the University of Cincinnati to major in urban management. As part of his final, this student had to work with a city council and create a five-year plan for the city council and then present to council. His mother later said that her son wrote a letter back home that said, "Make sure you go in and tell [my teacher] that I blew them out of the water because of his course."

The teachers of the thesis program admit that authentic forms of assessment can be difficult and time-consuming, but they believe that the experience is worth it. As one teacher explains it, "It's a lot easier to write a test quickly than it is to prepare an exhibition. You can Xerox a test from last year, but you can't Xerox an exhibition, you can't Xerox the coaching experience."

What teachers seem to appreciate most about the thesis class is the experience that the students gain and the sense of accomplishment that they feel when the experience is completed.

> *A sense of pride after students do their thesis defense is incredible.... It's neat to see the kid who doesn't like to speak get up and speak so passionately about the topic that he or she has been researching.* – A thesis teacher

The mentorship program is another school program that depends heavily on an assessment component. The teachers in this program see part of their mission as the export of authentic assessment practices into other departments in the school. Explains one teacher, "What we're trying to do right now is connect the entire staff with authentic experiences, bringing community experiences into the classroom, or taking the students out into the community to get them real-life experiences." Teachers in the mentorship program coach their students for exhibitions in other classes and encourage classroom teachers to employ these experiences more frequently. One of the mentorship teachers describes the process.

> *[The students] have finished [their exhibitions], and now the teachers are reporting back to us. We will be keeping that data by teacher, by subject, and by team. Everyone is to be involved. Each teacher is to offer a minimum of one experience per class per semester to their students. A lot of that is happening now. A guest speaker is an "authentic experience." We're a unique school in that, the tying in of the community. Our team will be monitoring that.* – A mentorship teacher

The use of authentic assessment by many departments and by many different teachers is a long-term goal at Reynoldsburg High School. The school's intent is to incorporate it slowly in as many different classrooms as possible and in various forms, exhibitions representing one prominent example. Those teachers who are using authentic assessment believe in its benefits for students, especially in the way that it prepares them for the world of business.

> *I think when we have students have more authentic assessments, they take their education more seriously. Maybe it's not that they take their whole education more seriously, but they take their task more seriously and they put more effort into it. So they get more out of it in terms of a better understanding of the concepts and knowledge and values that they were looking for to begin with. I think this helps them to be more comfortable in group settings and to be more comfortable in professionalism, in doing some of these things that outsiders or community members told us that they needed. [Businesses] need people that*

> *can think on their feet. They need people who can communicate well. They need people who can work in groups. Those were the repeated things.* – A teacher

Examples of authentic assessment exhibitions can be found in many different classrooms. Some teachers use exhibitions as a type of performance assessment. Others collaborate to do more problem-based type work. Teachers feel as though exhibitions are an effective way to express the individualization of the learner and to employ an authentic audience.

> *When kids come back from authentic audiences, or when they had to do a presentation somewhere and they'd come back, there was just a total excitement in the air. They'd be jumping and screaming and hollering and telling me what their feedback was. You don't have that when you pass back a test.* – A teacher

One commonly used form of authentic assessment is the practice known as "grading in pencil." The idea is that students should be given multiple opportunities to grasp a concept or body of knowledge, and should be allowed to retake a test until they are able to demonstrate competence. This practice receives mixed reviews, however:

> *There are some definite pluses to it and some definite minuses. It's an opportunity for students to improve their performance on a quiz or a test. Sometimes students use that as a crutch. I remember the first year when I allowed students a redo on anything. You would pass back a test, and wouldn't even have it all passed back, and someone would say, 'When's the redo?' allowing you to think that they didn't really study the first time around. They focus all their attention on the redo, and they don't focus on the current topic. Then you kind of get behind on the current, which leads you to have to do a redo on the current material, which wasn't the purpose of the whole process. I now do redos only for quizzes.* – A teacher

Some teachers feel that authentic assessment is overly concerned with the interests of business and that it under-prepares students for higher education.

> *We want more kids to pass the senior proficiency, and the ones from my subject area are reading and writing. And yet, what are we pushing around here? Alternative assessment. Then we complain that the kids can't write. Like my kids take the AP test, they might get college credit. That seems fairly authentic to me. I don't want to have them do some fake thing just to make some committee happy. ... I have some parents who, when they come in like at the beginning of the year for open house, are so happy to hear that my students are going to read and write a lot. They've been "projected" and "alternate-assessmented" to death.* – A teacher

Another teacher expresses concern about the absence of academic rigor associated with exhibitions that she has observed.

> *The couple times when I've sat in and watched a kid present, in all honesty, I sat there and I thought, "That kid could present by doing nothing but give his or her opinion." I don't think that's what this is supposed to be about.* – A teacher

In spite of reservations by some staff members, Reynoldsburg High School would like to establish a grand, summative exhibition requirement for all students prior to graduation. The high school principal envisions a cross-discipline, integrated demonstration of student achievement which would be the ultimate culminating experience:

> *We're really looking at an exhibition for seniors that would be interdisciplinary. This has been an ongoing debate for us as a Coalition school. We think kids ought to be able to give some kind of final demonstration of their learning. There ought to be connectedness between math, science, social studies, art, music, whatever. So when they demonstrate in their final display of what they know and they're able to do their production, their performance ought to speak to that kind of assimilation of their knowledge and skills.* – Current principal

> *My own philosophy would be that students at Reynoldsburg would take core subjects all four years — that they would pass the senior proficiency; that they would be able to show that they can use the knowledge that they've gained; that the senior proficiency would be a core knowledge, a base knowledge — but they have to be able to show us how they can use that knowledge in life and beyond high school. I'm talking about graduation exhibition. We don't have that yet. There is movement afoot to create that.* – A thesis instructor

Student-As-Worker, Teacher-As-Coach

> ***I'm more student-centered. There are more activities in class where the students are thinking and doing. Less lecture, more time for labs.***

The classroom walls are bare. There is one bulletin board at the back of the room. This contains the high school football schedule, scholarship information, the Ohio Math League contest dates, IBM posters, and a poster with a caricature of Einstein and the quote, "Do not worry about your difficulties in mathematics. I can assure you mine are greater."

During what is designated as the teacher's planning period, six students come to her room to work. The teacher leaves the room to meet with the department head regarding the accelerated learning program. The students sit in pairs and work through problems, helping each other intermittently. They are quiet and remain on task. Their conversation is about calculus. They are writing, pointing to work on their own and each other's papers. Some refer to graphing calculators as they work. They deliberate out loud — here, challenging someone's strategy; there, conceding to a more effective one. There is an ongoing side conversation about SAT scores and college applications.

> *...She is the best teacher in the school. Most students would agree. Somehow she just makes you understand it. I'm not sure how she does it, but you just get it when she teaches it. I love calculus. It's my favorite course.* – A student

The bell rings and the teacher returns to begin class. There are 16 students — nine girls and seven boys. They review homework problems, identifying those they need help with. With each one she pushes them further. "Let's see if we can throw in a second derivative here."

Her voice moves up and down in pitch and volume. She is back and forth across the front of the room, mostly on her toes, almost in constant motion. The students are with her with their eyes. Here she writes on the board. She is placing herself close to students, looking down at their work. She challenges them individually. "Impress me. I know you know this . . . Yes, yes. That's exactly right." She smiles a lot and they do likewise. She interjects math humor. The students get it, and the laughter is genuine. She calls students by name, not waiting for them to raise their hands. She takes them through problems and they do not hesitate to think out loud, some times correctly, sometimes not. In the latter case, she coaxes the correct strategies from them, never giving too much, too quickly, so that in every case, it is the student who eventually discovers the way through.

Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) suggest that adults often overlook students when considering school improvement initiatives or, at best, consider students only as the potential beneficiaries of change — rarely as participants in a process of change and organizational life. But, they say, the key theme in recent research about school improvement is student engagement.

One of the most important principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools is a focus on the student-as-worker and teacher-as-coach philosophy. Fullan & Stiegelbauer indicate that, ordinarily, only a minority of students are really involved in basic educational processes, with the rest being passive watchers and waiters who pay a minimal amount of attention to formal classroom work, channeling their energy and enthusiasm into their groups of close friends. The principle of student-as-worker is intended to change that orientation. Effective school reform in their view means a change in the role relationship between teachers and students, with the student becoming more active and the teacher acting as a coach or guide to appropriate student activities.

The Reynoldsburg school superintendent expresses his view about the centrality of students by pointing to the development of personal responsibility. In his view, if students don't assume responsibility for their own learning, they end up cheating themselves.

> *Responsibility, accountability, that's part of the problem in this country. You are responsible for what you do. Students have to understand that if they don't do their homework or don't come to school, they are going to pay the price. It's not the parents, or the superintendent, or the principal, or teachers. They're really cheating themselves. They should be demanding that their teachers give them the skills and knowledge that they need in order to*

> *be successful. Not just a passive recipient, but actively demanding that they not be cheated out of their education.* – District superintendent

Many teachers agree that students need to develop greater ownership of the educational process and they believe that the answer lies in a more intense focus on student performance in the classroom.

> *I think all students need to learn how to accept a task, follow through on the task, accomplish the task along the way. Students ask, for instance, "Why do we have to take thesis? I'm not going to go to college. I'll never write a paper." This is about a lot more than writing the paper. Yes, you're going to work on your writing skills, you're going to work on your reading skills. Everybody needs to improve in those areas. But it's also about saying, "This is what I have to get done; this is what I have to do to be able to successfully complete this."* – A teacher

Many teachers believe that the increased emphasis on student participation means that students learn how to access information, how to organize information, and how to demonstrate their grasp of that information in a more independent and self-sufficient manner. Students in this setting are not able to depend on the teacher for answers as long as the required information can be obtained through their own investigation.

> *They have to go to the downtown [Columbus] library. That's really rewarding. I go down there and spend about a week in the library, and kids will come down with me. It is really neat to see kids get in there and read the newspapers about their event. One student this year, his project is on the Zodiac murders. We couldn't find anything. We were all over down there trying to find something. We finally went to the very first murder that we knew of and looked up that murder. We got a clue there. He was like Sherlock Holmes. This is a student at-risk. This is not one of our AP kids. I know he's learning stuff.* – A teacher

> *They have to actively get involved to be able to do some of these things. They have to seek the knowledge themselves. They have to be self-motivated, that type of thing. Not everybody does projects like that, but I think that's popping up quite a bit.* – A teacher

Another teacher emphasizes the importance of student activity as a way of reinforcing understanding.

> *I think if we can work to produce students that don't just sit there, take in knowledge, spit out knowledge; that if we can produce students that will take knowledge, assimilate it, figure things out for themselves, put together ideas, and come up with original ideas — I think that's the goal. I think when you sit there and lecture to a student for 60 minutes, sure they might get some things, but you learn more by doing, actively participating, and by asking questions that make them think, instead of spewing out, "Two plus two is four."* – A teacher

The former principal believes that an increased emphasis on student engagement is the measurement standard for school improvement in the years to come. He believes that the centrality of the teacher in the classroom must diminish in order to allow students to have a more prominent place in the teaching and learning process.

> *I think you can walk through a lot of high schools... [and] tell pretty quickly the culture of the schools. All you've got to do is... see who's up front or see how the desks are arranged. ... I like the story ... that if a Martian landed on the building and watched what went on in a typical American high school, and gave a report to the principal, the Martian might describe the school as a place where the younger generation watches the older generation work.* – Former principal

Allegiance to the student-as-worker philosophy has meant that teachers have had to make adjustments in their approach to instruction. These adjustments include decreased lecture time, changes in the physical setup of the classroom, and extending the classroom out beyond the school walls.

> *I try not to talk any more than 30 minutes, and it's unusual if it's 30 minutes, because I want them to work at it. I want them to discover it. As they're working, I'm available to go around and help. I can be the arbitrator or ask them questions to help them out. It allows me the flexibility to do a little of everything in one class period and, hopefully, I hit on the way you learn best in one of them. I think all of this has made me much more aware of the kids in my classroom. "What can I do to help them?" as opposed to, "What can I tell them?" They're going to have to learn to do it on their own. When they get into the university, no one is going to tell them every single thing. I think it's given me a different perspective on what my role should be in the classroom. More the facilitator, as opposed to being the only one that knows it.* – A teacher

> *My teaching has evolved drastically since I started teaching. I was very structured. Everyone was sitting silently at their desks working. When I came here, I did go to a couple of sessions on cooperative learning, and I started using cooperative learning more, and started using student-centered teaching instead of teacher-directed teaching. Just the whole idea of the teacher-as-coach theory. In the past five or six years I try to make that the focus of my classroom. I have information that can guide them, but I'd like them to be the workers. The students are more involved in their learning. It's not just me dumping information into them; they're more responsible for their learning. They have to guide their learning. They have to be assertive in their learning. So I give them as much responsibility as I can for their own learning. I use partnering often.* – A teacher

The change in emphasis requires both students and teachers to reexamine their relationships. Students are not always ready to assume a more active role, and teachers are not always sure about the best way to encourage them. One teacher expresses the difficulties associated with orienting freshmen to this kind of approach:

> *I have freshmen this year, and I'm used to juniors and seniors. Kids that are fourteen need a lot more direction, need a lot more hand holding. Knowing about Reynoldsburg and its reputation, my assumption of the kids that I have was different than what was reality. The ability to tie it all together is different. ... Their ability to be self-directed is very different, so I'm learning a lot this year. You have to be more directive with freshmen. ... I'm having to adapt my style to the kids that I have.* – A teacher

The result of this change in emphasis can be increased stress on both teachers and students as the initial adjustment requires more work on everyone's part. Initially teachers may encounter some student resistance.

> *I think anybody that has been actively engaged in the change process probably has redesigned what they're doing in the classroom so that it's not just the teacher being the only person that knows something — allowing the kids to discuss amongst themselves; to try to come to some conclusions; to go and look up things that they don't know instead of just raising their hands and asking, and getting a two-sentence answer back. ...I hear kids complain that they have to work too hard in that class, and they don't want to do it. It's a whole lot easier to sit there and have somebody just tell you, and you write down a sentence and you give it back to them on Friday on the test, than if somebody says, "That's a good question. Let's go check on the Internet or let's check in the library for some books," and maybe you have to read or talk to someone, or call someone in the community to get some insight on it; that's a lot of work.* – A teacher

The kinds of adjustments that need to be made are often in the form of classroom activities. Teachers who subscribe to the student-as-worker approach in the classroom report that they place a greater emphasis on student projects and laboratory work. For example, students in one mathematics class are expected to apply their knowledge of mathematics to calculate the proper balance requirements in producing a mobile.

> *The mobile project which you see hanging back there, it's kind of off-balance now because it's been knocked by some of the kids. They had to mathematically give us the formulas that would balance a mobile like that with the different objects. It kept them coming back and asking questions time and time again, because they had an ultimate goal that if they didn't have the mathematics right, or the concept right, then they couldn't get to the finished product. So it kept them coming back and asking and asking and asking. We had it all lined up with several deep concepts and that type of thing. Then with any lab that we do, it's totally student-ed as far as it's not us standing up there telling them what to do.* – A mathematics teacher

The school's calculus-calculator class is commonly referred to as C-squared, and the course outline for that class usually includes hands-on, student-led projects.

> *We have CBL, which is calculator-based laboratories. They are little units that take different readings, and this one took a sound reading and it produced a sign wave, up and down. The kids had to analyze that — how the sign wave was different based on what [they] did with the tuning fork. Did [they] hit it harder? Did [they] hit it softer? Was it going longer or shorter? That sort of thing. That kept them going back to doing it and then figuring it out, and then doing it and seeing how it was relating to the graph on the calculator and the equations. So then the equations that I was teaching in C-squared were no longer plain old boring sign equations. They had some kind of a meaning. The amplitude actually meant something in a real-world situation.* – A mathematics teacher

Greater student participation in the daily routines of the classroom often means putting students in groups and encouraging them to work collaboratively. The goal is partly to meet the recommendations of business consultants — that students be trained to work with their colleagues in the workplace. Consequently, the student-as-worker approach often includes a corresponding emphasis on cooperative learning. As a teaching-learning strategy, cooperative learning has a well-founded theory base and considerable research verifying its effectiveness. Over 550 experimental and 100 correlational studies have been conducted by a wide range of researchers with different age students, in different subject areas, and in different settings (Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 1992; Slavin, 1990, 1991).

> *One of the primary goals was getting kids to work together. That's one of the things that business people expected, so, in that sense, collaboration is directly related, and it's directly influencing that. There is one team right now looking at how do we create more sophomore teams so that every freshmen and every sophomore is a part of a collaborative team* – A teacher

> *I do partner quizzes; I do group work; I do all kinds of jigsaw activities. And I know I'm not alone. Group projects and that type of thing.* – A teacher

A visit to a mathematics class illustrates the kinds of cooperative activities that characterize many of the Reynoldsburg High School classrooms. The most obvious activity is cooperative learning. Students are seldom sent to the board by themselves. Some quizzes are group quizzes. Two geometry teachers use a discovery learning approach that they adopted after receiving training several years ago. The participating teachers set students up with an agenda for the day. "I want you to draw a triangle," explains the teacher, "and I want you to connect the two midpoints, and I want you to just think about the possibilities and the things that could happen." The calculator itself is a used as a computer that allows students to drag points so that they can see their theories applied. The teachers feel that it is an excellent way to teach geometry. This particular class is single-blocked, but the teacher wishes that it was double-blocked so that she would have more time to set up discovery circumstances and discussion.

Student participation is also an important part of the assessment process, thereby rendering it active, as well as authentic. Sometimes it is project-based, as when students are preparing a video. A mathematics teacher says that student participation not only has affected assessment in her classroom but has influenced her decisions about the best ways to present and engage students with new material.

> *We've made a list of the things that are going to be on the quiz. They've check-marked anything they thought they really understood; they circled the things they weren't real sure of; and then we listed all of the things we did to practice — Did we go to the board? Did we work in groups? Did we work in pairs? Did we work alone? Was it a teacher-initiated discussion? Then I had them number them. Number one for the thing that helped them the most, number two for the next, and so forth down the line. On the bottom half of the sheet, they compared what they did on the quiz to what they thought they knew how to do. I want them to understand and to evaluate for themselves.* – A mathematics teacher

As Reynoldsburg teachers make greater demands on student self-reliance, parents have adjustments to make as well. Many parents, whose school experience was more traditional, have trouble interpreting the descriptions they hear of teacher responses and classroom activities. They are often unprepared for the open-ended discovery emphasis of some classrooms.

> *I think the parents expect the kids to be taught the way they were taught. … So they get a little bit freaked out if their kid doesn't have the traditional, this-is-what-you've-got-to-know, spit-it-back-to-me kind of thing. When I ask the kids to figure it out for themselves, they question that. That's real foreign to them and takes a little while to get used to it. The kids get used to it pretty quick and I think they end up enjoying it more. I've got kids from last year calling me, and that feels good. This way is more interesting. And I like getting feedback from them the next year. I don't think I would have that if I just lectured and had worksheets.* – A teacher

The inquiry-based, student-led approach to instruction is not without its critics. Research has demonstrated that it must be used carefully and should not be the exclusive approach to classroom instruction. Leinwold (1992) identifies the "child-centeredness" versus "subject-centeredness" debate — or, more accurately, the discussions about how to strike a balance between the two pedagogical approaches — as a perennial source of conflict in American schools (p. 31). Weinert and Helmke (1995) acknowledge that under certain circumstances, teacher-controlled forms of instruction can actually lead to active and successful learning. They also point out that to the extent that knowledge acquisition and academic performance are the goals, teacher-controlled methods of students' active learning are superior — especially for younger students and in well-structured subject domains (p. 141). Effective instruction — both in the classroom and in the laboratory under experimental conditions — often occurs when the teacher actively presents information to students and supports individual learning, rather than merely providing the external conditions that make individual or social learning success possible (Weinert & Helmke, 1995).

Some Reynoldsburg teachers are sensitive to this need for balance and express concerns that the importance placed on reform means that the balance is shifting too heavily in favor of student involvement, and away from a thorough and consistent survey of subject-matter content.

> *We say we're striving for excellence around here, but [we're] not. Kids know less and less; they read less and less; they write less and less; they think less and less. My goals for my students are very simple as an English teacher: I want them to be better readers, better writers, better thinkers. There's such an emphasis on school-to-work. ... That's one way you can divide up people — whether they think school is there to make students good little citizens, good little worker bees, or ... whole individuals who can think for themselves, who might not necessarily be very good worker bees. I'm not a very good worker bee, but I would rather be the person I am than be a good little worker bee. I think maybe in some ways that's the key to success here — to not get picked on, or whatever, is to be a good little worker bee.* – A teacher

Other teachers express a concern that a teacher's expertise is not well-utilized in a classroom setting where students are encouraged to bypass the teacher in their search for answers. They feel that in many cases, the teacher is the best resource available.

> *If you say to me here that what I want you to do is to reorganize and send all your students to the library, and come up with some group projects to present to the class as a whole, in that way we'll cover "x" amount of material, my response is going to be, "That's doing an injustice to my students and, to a certain extent, an injustice to me." When someone makes a decision that limits what I do, whether intentionally or not — and in most instances it is unintentional — the reality is that I feel very defensive about it, I feel that this devalues what I do. I will fight that all the way to retirement.* – A teacher

Teachers who resist the student-as-worker philosophy see students who are well-trained in group work, but uninformed about the core subjects.

> *The method has become more important than the content. And what upsets me is that I don't think a bunch of people around here even realize that's happening. ...I think that's why some of us come across looking like anti-reform people. People talk about higher-order thinking skills and they make them go through their groups, ... but what they're thinking about is so basic that there's just not that much there. Every year there's more and more ground that we have to make up because they've been out there doing group work. I know there's a lot of process-oriented stuff going on out there, and I know that the process is really important, but can't they process something of value?* – A teacher

> *I would like to see academics strongly updated, concentrate very heavily on higher-order thinking skills in the academic subject areas. I don't care if you don't want to do it the old-fashioned way. If you want to do your groups and your integrations and all that other stuff,*

> *that's fine; but from the mathematical standpoint, all I get, since I teach the upper-level before they leave here, are kids with less and less skills. I can't continue to do what I need to do to prepare them to take, for example, an AP calculus test, because I've got to continually go back and teach them geometry skills, Algebra II skills, and that's just not fair.* – A teacher

The concern that students are not as well-prepared for advanced-placement courses is a commonly expressed sentiment among teachers of college-bound students. The focus on student involvement which is generated by the coalition principles is seen by some as anti-intellectual.

> *Our principal said something about [how] he really thinks that some of the other classes require more thinking than the AP classes because the APs are so content-intensive and so fact-intensive. I say, the AP English test is like an exercise in pure thinking. I would not waste my time on a class that was just stuffing facts into kids like little fat geese or something. What would be the point of that? Things are encroaching on the AP track. My program was encroached upon when the ninth grade came up, because the advanced nine got trashed. So these kids, like James and Kim here, didn't read The Odyssey in the ninth grade. Some people would say, "So what?" I don't say, "So what?" because I care that they don't have that basis. ...I think that still to be an educated person in this world, ... you need to know something about western civilization. ... It used to be that we were left alone because we were the advanced program, and it was acknowledged that we have to be fairly traditional, although people who come into my class don't think I'm traditional. ... Content still matters here.* – A teacher

Students express a range of opinions about working in groups. Sometimes it seems to work well; other times not as well.

> *With the World Connections, we do a lot of group work. We spent a whole period working on the central question, and we worked in groups. ... I think it all depends on who you work with. When teachers just tell you who to work with, sometimes you get people who are really willing to work, but then you get stuck with the lazy people and you get stuck doing all the work. In my biology class, I got stuck with a lab partner. ...He would do absolutely nothing and I would get stuck doing all the work. ... My old lab partner, we really worked well together.* – A student
>
> *I think group work works really well for people who are willing to put forth the effort. That pretty much goes with anything. I just did a mock trial and I had a lot of fun with it. I was the lead attorney. ...But you find out who the leaders are relatively quick. They covered information, they presented their side of the case, no problem. But you get people who won't work together and don't care, and they're going to blow it off. For those of us who like working together and are going to put forth the effort, I found it a lot of fun and I learned a lot more than I would just reading a textbook.* – A student

The answer to maintaining an appropriate balance between process and content at Reynoldsburg High School lies partly in the school's ability to provide options for both teachers and students. Some teachers believe in the benefits of learner-centered instruction, while others prefer a more traditional, teacher-directed approach. Some students enjoy collaborative group work, while others like the challenge of mastering rigorous standards of content. In order to meet the goals of student and teacher choice, of a personalized school environment, of an intellectual focus, and of a learner-centered emphasis, one of the tools that the school employs is teaming.

Teaming

> ***For teaching on a team, there's nothing that compares with the camaraderie that develops among the teachers themselves. We're kind of like one family.***

At the teacher level, change is strongly related to the extent to which teachers interact with each other. Within the school, collegiality among teachers, as measured by the frequency of communication and mutual support, is a strong indicator of implementation success (Firestone & Louis, in press; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Little, 1990; Louis & Kruse, 1995). One related Coalition-inspired device that is widely promoted at Reynoldsburg High School is the grouping of teachers into teaching teams. These teaching teams share a common planning period each day, and they are responsible for a common group of students. They are designed to facilitate cross-disciplinary instruction, further the school's personalization goals, and provide personal and professional support for the team members.

The original teams, established in the early years of school improvement initiatives at Reynoldsburg High School, were targeted for sophomores and juniors. The sophomore team, titled World Connections, was a world literature and global studies focus, while the junior team, titled American Connections, emphasized American literature and American history. With the addition of the ninth grade to the high school, this arrangement was altered to focus attention at the freshman level. Four freshman teams were created, each with four teachers from the core areas of mathematics, science, social studies, and English.

On any given day, a parent or other observer can attend teacher-planning meetings. A number of issues may be considered. Today, the team planning time is taken up with a parent contact. The team tries to make both positive and problem-related phone contacts often. This particular conversation lasted for most of the hour as the team passed the phone from one member to the next.

One of the team members is a substitute who has replaced the English teacher on the team for the first part of this year. The regular teacher has been absent because of illness. When she returns next week, the team is going to a modified double-block schedule (she has been the energy behind this initiative). One of the other team members expresses reservations. Having tried double-block scheduling with eleventh graders, he is fearful of those students who "seem bound and determined to not let it work — those kids who flat out don't want to be here. You try cooperative learning activities, and they just don't want any part of it." He expresses a willingness to give it a try but admits to remaining skeptical.

The team will begin with double-blocks that will leave them seeing two groups of students one week and the second two groups the following week. For the time being, the team will retain Fridays on the present schedule and see all four groups to touch base.

> *There are four freshman teams and one sophomore team. The sophomore team, this is its seventh year, and teachers interviewed for it originally. There is one freshman team, which is still intact, which was developed at the junior high, and I believe that it was voluntary. If you wanted to be a part of this, you could. The other three freshman teams were told that they would be part of a team upon coming up to the high school. [The former principal] sat all of the freshman teachers down at the old junior high and said they were going to be teams. "Who do you want to work with? Who don't you want to work with? Who would you work with well? Who wouldn't you work with well?" And then he tried to pair them up as best as possible.* – A teacher

The original intent for the freshman teams was to provide one emphasis for college preparatory students and a different emphasis for students likely to choose vocational options. Three college preparatory teams and a Tech-Prep Nine team were created. Tech-Prep Nine was geared toward students planning to attend a career center, but it was eventually abandoned when it grew into a repository for students with poor attendance, bad behavior, and low grades. In place of Tech-Prep Nine, all of the freshmen are now taking a freshman foundations course which involves career exploration and advice about scheduling classes. The need to acclimate the freshman class to the expansive environment of Reynoldsburg High School, and the desire to maintain personal connections with individual students, has become the central purpose of the freshman teaching teams. As a result, interdisciplinary lessons and Coalition-related classroom practices do not always receive full attention from the teachers of the freshman teams.

> *From my perspective, the freshman teams don't do coalition work and what was intended of them when they were formed. The original freshman team did form [at] the junior high school when the freshmen were still there. But I think since it's been moved to the high school and the other teams were put together, I see the freshman teams as more of a survival — helping the freshmen survive their first year of high school, so the rest of their three years they can go to school. That's pretty harsh, I guess.* – A teacher

The principal agrees with that assessment, saying, "With the freshman teams, it's more of a personalization team; with [the sophomore team], it's more about integration and assessment." Personalization is an important concept at Reynoldsburg High School, and the teachers see it as a valid and vital part of the teaming mission. Personalization is viewed by many teachers as the most important advantage of teaming. At the beginning of the year, during the first days of school, teachers spend time talking about themselves and getting to know their kids. In one instance, teachers have their students do a teacher quiz — Which teacher did this? Which teacher likes to do that? The intent is personalization — students getting to know their teachers as a group, teachers getting acquainted with their students.

> *If a student is off a team, they never see their teachers together. They see us together. They see us working together. They know that we're going to talk about them. They know that we're going to find out if they've skipped a class. They know that. That's just a crucial, crucial thing with the teaming. Just all of us working together; they know that we'll be there.* – A teacher

In another instance, the teachers divide their students into small groups in order to give each student more individual attention. Discussion may center around various topics — How do you become a quality person? What makes a quality person? What makes a quality student? For the teachers and students it represents an extra learning experience which is related to life skills. In yet another case, teachers organize incentive days, using that time to conduct team-building activities. The curtain between history and English class is opened and all the students in those two classes do some form of activity. The activity might not follow the formal curriculum, but the students work with each other, participate in cooperative learning, work as teams, and work with their teachers.

Team members are responsible for routine discipline concerns and for contacting parents about the classroom performance of the students on their team.

> *I would say that we could call 90 percent of our parents today, they would know the four names of the teachers on the team, and they would recognize us if we saw them in [the grocery story]. We just have that kind of time and that kind of communication. Discipline problems are almost non-existent, because the kids know that we're going to call mom and dad if they try something that's not appropriate.* – A freshman team teacher

Teaming presents advantages to teachers as well as to students. Teachers appreciate the personal and professional support that results from being a member of a team.

> *The number one important professional development experience I had was the interdisciplinary team. I had only taught two years, and I was teamed with three veteran teachers. That was a really powerful professional development experience. Just the experience of working with other teachers, being in other teachers' rooms, planning with other teachers, developing philosophies about how you approach kids, and all kinds of things.* – A teacher

> *We help each other, we observe each other, we team teach when we can. I can walk into her classroom and take over at any second. She can do the same for mine. Our children don't even bat an eye.* – A teacher

> *Professionally, I think that it is a positive move. I have grown immensely from my first year of teaching since I've been on this team, because I had three other very good teachers to model myself from. So as a new teacher, it was an extremely positive experience.* – A teacher

A common planning time is built into the master schedule for each of the teaching teams. The team members are free to structure this time as they see fit. Sometimes the team members discuss curriculum, sometimes student management, and other times they use it for supporting and encouraging one another.

> *Team meetings — giving teachers the time during the school day to work as a team on curriculum — usually we deal with kid issues, on how to get parents in to discuss their kids' behavior, their kids' progress, or working on a joint unit, or just sharing our own work. That's one indicator. Not all of the teams do that. All of the teams have the time, but they don't all use it the same way that we do. We're given that during the school day. I don't think if we had to do that on our own time, it would be the same level. Because at three o'clock, when you're exhausted, you don't want to stay around every single day to meet with your team. But to have that give and take, and do it during the school day, we don't have to teach five classes, we just have to teach four, because one of our classes is considered that team time.* – A teacher

> *I've enjoyed being on the freshmen team. This is my sixth year with the same team. I was to the point that it had been nine years of stand-alone teaching math. I was getting a little bored. So when the team aspect came along, it was a great chance to start examining what I'm doing and how it relates to other subjects. I think my math teaching has improved, because I see what the students are doing in their other classes. I sometimes can modify what I'm doing to fit what they're studying in another course, or I understand when they don't have enough time to do my assignment because they've got a big project in their English class, and I know about it. I know about these things from team meetings. Every day we meet. Most days we're sitting in the same room grading our papers, and we spend some time talking about individual student concerns. But just that common time, whether we mean to or not, we start discussing curriculum or maybe students who are struggling in particular classes. We find out that it's a common theme in all their classes and then we start addressing those.* – A freshman team teacher

Teaming does not necessarily mean team teaching. Teachers plan together, meet together for managerial issues, and work cooperatively on matters of student performance, but they don't necessarily teach cooperatively at the same time and in the same classroom. On some occasions, however, this does occur.

> *From time to time we are in each other's rooms teaching. When we introduced this unit, it was two of us with the open wall and we spoke to 60 kids at once. It doesn't happen very often. When the unit changed, we pulled all 110 kids into that double room, and all four teachers just spoke at once. It was a nice community meeting for our team. We do that from time to time.* – A team teacher

One variation on the teaching teams is the practice of creating dyads. When two (or possibly three) teachers choose to work collaboratively outside the structure of the freshman and sophomore grade-level teams, the Reynoldsburg administration accommodates their efforts by scheduling those teachers' classes in consecutive periods, thereby permitting them some flexibility in grouping their students.

> *Teachers [who] are working in dyads or triads are voluntary. These are indications of collaboration. I think they work rather well. You have an idea, so you run with it. The people who started my team had an idea and ran with it, but the three freshman teams were not voluntary. They didn't have the idea, so there wasn't the ownership. All of the dyads were started because those teachers wanted to do this. There are at least three dyads. There have been others here and there, but teachers have decided that they would go on and do something differently from the dyads, so those teams have folded over time.* – A teacher

> *The dyad allows students to see applications better. It's been a big change since I came to Reynoldsburg, and that's what I wanted. Single-period instruction was too inflexible. We work closely to make connections. We've taken classes together.* – A dyad teacher

> *It's a good way for students to make connections. This year we're doing a theme on Utopia. They read Utopia, Fahrenheit 451, [and] watched Swing Kids and Dead Poets Society. We're getting ready to do a comparative government assignment. Usually I take them on Monday and Wednesday, and she takes them on Tuesday and Thursday. On Friday, we share them. The attraction was more time to spend with students. You have so much more freedom. Students can ask questions.* – A dyad teacher

Dyads allow the participating teachers to alter the daily master schedule according to the design of their cooperative lessons, thereby serving the same purpose as the double-blocked periods, but with greater flexibility. Teachers teaching in a dyad may have the same students for four periods in a semester. The advantage to the dyad is that teachers may have more control over their day. Because the double-block is written into the schedule, it tends to be less flexible than the dyad. Teachers teaching in a dyad, however, can double-block when they need to; they can single-block; and they can make customized arrangements. One dyad reported 14 or 15 different schedules that they had created for their students.

In some cases, teachers pursue a totally informal approach to teaming. In this setting, the master schedule does not accommodate cooperative planning of flexible grouping, but teachers find time to touch base and coordinate their lessons.

> *I will speak quite a bit with the AP chemistry teacher. He teaches an enriched chemistry class which, for the most part, has a lot of the same students that I have in my pre-calculus class. We share quite a bit back and forth. The mathematics that he notices that they would get, he shares, so I try to throw something else into my curriculum to enhance that. But we also have talked about maybe throwing together a calculus/physics kind of thing. That kind of collaboration for school improvement, I think is very good.* – A teacher

If the personalities of the teachers match up well, informal teaming options are as effective as those that are formally designed.

> *Everything that we do, we do the same. We take every grade the same, we compare our scores, we compare the quality of the activities. If I think that it went terrible for me, she might say, "Oh I loved it, I loved it, I loved it!" Then I'd say, "Let's talk about this, because if you loved it and I didn't, I didn't do something right." Or sometimes it's the reverse. If she has a great experience and changed something that she thought was going to be disastrous, she always says, "Oh, do this! Scratch what we were going to do and try this. It was so fabulous. You'll just love it." So I do. The beauty of planning together is [that], when we come together and plan, there's this wonderful third woman that emerges, and she's smarter than both of us. We just can't work alone anymore. We need each other very much. If you would watch us plan, you would laugh, because the whole time we're about as exuberant as I am right now. She's like that friend you wait your whole life to meet.* – A teacher

As with other initiatives at Reynoldsburg, teaming is not universally accepted. In some cases, teachers simply tire of it and seek new ways to approach instruction.

> *[Teaming] was a really unique, great opportunity, but at the end of three years, it was my personal need not to be on a team at that time. When I got to school, if I wanted to accomplish A-B-C, then I could get it accomplished; and when you're on a team of other teachers, it's not just your agenda, but it's everybody's agenda. So I just opted not to be on a team after three years.* – A teacher

There are also those teachers who prefer to work alone.

> *Teaming, that's driven by some externals, rather than, "Do I have to be a part of the team to be an effective teacher?" No, I don't think I do. All these kinds of things — there's almost a sense of unreality about it. I know it's making somebody's job easier — the counselors don't have to worry about scheduling, the administrators now have a much easier process to go through. I'm doing the things that I've always done, and that's all I'm asking, I guess — to let me keep doing these things.* – A teacher

Although teachers who hold this perspective are not forced to join with their colleagues in cross-disciplinary collaboration, there is a feeling among some teachers that rejection of teaming is equated with outdated methods of instruction and uncooperative attitudes.

> *There was no real attempt to coerce into one or another pedagogical model, or no attempt to lock into a particular style of teaching. Reynoldsburg High School is big enough for an AP teacher who lectures; big enough for a team approach that emphasizes projects; big enough for work study programs. In fact, that's what we need, because the community is demanding from Reynoldsburg High School not just one model.* – A teacher

Some teachers doubt that this right to follow their own preferences — to not join teams, for example — is absolute or secure. They point to the support for dyads and teams (and the perception that all grade 10s may be organized into teams), the requirement of new staff to be part of a "Critical Friends Group," the statements by those who publicly endorse autonomy that in double-blocking you cannot lecture all the time, the option given to students to choose single- or double-block courses, and the desire to define a senior exhibition as representing an orientation of teaching that is preferred and sought.

The high school does hope to expand the number of sophomore teaching teams. These plans make some of those teachers who are not currently involved in a teamed circumstance a little uneasy.

> *I'm not afraid of team teaching, but we're hearing rumors that next year all the sophomores will be on a team.... If I'm forced to be on a team, I will be open to that and I'm probably going to like it. I don't know if I'll ever just choose to do that unless I hook up with the right person. I like doing my own thing. ...There just hasn't been any good match.* – A teacher

Working with the right person is just as important to teams of teachers as it is to teams of students. When personalities mesh, things go well. When the mix is not as ideal, teaming is not always effective.

> *Part of it is making sure the right four teachers are working well together. It's exhausting when two people on the team have to carry the load of the four. This is what I'm finding. .... We have two team members who don't carry their load, so consequently two of us are wearing ourselves thin trying to carry that load. So it's careful hiring of individuals who are dedicated, who want to be a part of that team, and who are knowledgeable in integration and the principles that a team is based on. One teacher was brought on because they weren't being effective as a freshman teacher and they thought they would be more effective; the other was brought on out of necessity because we needed a science teacher. It's, "Who's got the schedule that will fit in?" rather than looking for a person to fill the position and then moving other people around. Instead of looking for the best person, we look for the best fit. The exhaustion is a result of an imbalance of work. Careful hiring is a necessity.* – A teacher

To team or not to team? Except for those who teach freshmen, the answer to the question currently resides with individual choice. Whether or not all teachers should ultimately learn how to function as a team member, teaming continues as a desirable goal for many members of the Reynoldsburg faculty.

> *I see [teaming] as highly successful. It's almost like a school within a school. The larger schools get, the more disengaged some students are because they feel like they come in and they're a number — that nobody really knows them. But on the teams, I don't think that students feel that way. Teachers know them so well. They know their strengths and they know their weaknesses. It involves that contact be made with the home; and frequently it's done by the whole team making a conference call. There you've got four teachers making that call home; they're giving that parent all kinds of feedback. It connects the parent to the school.*
> – An administrator

> *I'm on the World Connections team. Our team is for tenth graders, and there's only 96 on our team. We have four teachers, which is four core classes. They changed their grading scale. You have to have a 92 to have a B. It's really hard because if we were in normal classes, and they had the regular 50 is an F, up to 60 is a D, 70 was a C, 80 was a B, and 90 and up was an A, if we still had that, it would be a lot easier and we would all have really good grades. But they've lowered it to make us work harder for our grades. I think that's really good. For those people planning on going to college, it's going to be a lot harder than they plan on it being anyway. Having to work hard is something that they're going to have to do anyway. They're teaching that early* – A student

Some teachers suggest that more formal training in teaming might reduce some of the potential problems and increase the effectiveness of existing and future teaching teams. As much as they hate to suggest another reason to have a meeting, they feel that training is essential. Teachers occasionally need training in how to work with each other, in how to operate as a team, and in how to collaborate over ideas and resources. Getting all the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools to come together is a challenge. Training is not only a reasonable answer to improving teaming, but a potential solution to effective implementation of all the coalition principles. In an effort to provide such training for all interested staff members, Reynoldsburg High School has sought to establish a thorough program of staff development.

Staff Development

> ***I have developed more in my first year as a teacher here than I did in my other six years, and it has continued.***

The high school media center is quiet. The only sounds are that of the ventilation system and the voice of a teacher. The Rookie Roundtable, an informal after-school discussion group for first-to-third-year Reynoldsburg teachers, is meeting in the rear of the media center. The library is large, but the part of the room being used for the meeting is sectioned off by bookcases, giving the feel of a smaller, more intimate setting. Several round tables are arranged in a semi-curricular fashion, and seated at the focal point of that arrangement is a veteran high school teacher. The teacher is speaking about the history and the advantages of double-blocking to the rookies.

The Rookie Roundtable was developed to acquaint new teachers with school policies and practices. Those teachers who have not established a supportive network with their teaching neighbors can find an opportunity to ask questions and gather information. All teachers are welcome to attend; today, two other veteran teachers who combine double-blocking with team teaching are sitting among the first-year teachers. Occasionally, one of the new teachers can be seen nodding in agreement with the observations of the veteran teacher, but no one interrupts with comments or questions. There is a sense that they are seated at the master's feet.

The moderator talks on about the use of cooperative learning in the classroom. She speaks without notes or outline, her own words reminding her of related issues that she wants to address. She moves from one topic to another with the ease of someone who has benefited from many years of experience.

The Rookie Roundtable has at least two purposes — first to inform, but also to persuade. After about 35 minutes, the moderator invites the other experienced teachers to share observations. First one speaks, then the other elaborates on the comments of the first. One of the rookie teachers responds by saying, "That sounds great." After a few minutes, the moderator reassumes her role, summarizing the advantages to double-blocking. She then asks for questions. There is only one, which is quickly answered. The moderator reminds everyone that another Rookie Roundtable is scheduled for the following week. She asks the new teachers to come to the meeting with reflections and observations about their own experiences at Reynoldsburg High School. As the meeting concludes, everyone quickly exits except one teacher, who remains behind to talk for a few more minutes with the moderator.

When she has finished talking with the teacher, the moderator offers her one regret about the Rookie Roundtable — the failure of the planners to invite guidance counselors. Without the help of the guidance department, students may be unaware of the advantages to double-blocked classes and, in some cases, may be discouraged from scheduling them. She is concerned that the guidance department is not sympathetic or convinced of the benefits of this particular component of their school improvement initiatives.

Providing information about, orientation to, and understanding of a school the size of Reynoldsburg High School is no easy task. In addition to being an expert in a specific area of the curriculum, staff members are required to have a grasp of all the practices that are endorsed by coalition principles and a sense of the way those principles are operationalized through teaming, cross-disciplinary instructional integration, block-scheduling, personalization, learner-centered teaching methods, authentic instruction, and alternative assessments. In addition, staff members must learn the system of communication, the norms of professional behavior, the forms of collaboration, and means to professional collegiality. Whenever possible, it is also desirable that Reynoldsburg teachers become innovators, implementors, and leaders in instructional improvement. In light of such considerable expectations, professional development is critical to the ongoing success of Reynoldsburg High School. As one teacher states it, "You either need to be in a classroom learning something or you have to be there teaching it. I appreciate the value of education more now. For me, this is the time."

Teachers are encouraged to find a professional development approach which will keep them abreast of the school's specific focuses, as well as a general emphasis on personal professional advancement. One committee, for example, is focusing on staff development. The principal has indicated that he wants every staff member to have a professional development plan. This committee is responsible for options that staff members can choose. Critical Friends Groups is one example. Some people are pursuing master's degrees; some are doing seminars, and professional conferences.

> *We've had a lot of opportunity on this staff to do a lot of professional development. The money has been there through Venture Capital, though the principal is just making sure that the money was allotted and you were allowed to go. More so than I've ever experienced in any other school district.* – A teacher

One of the general professional goals is to restructure the daily routine of teachers so that they are involved with fewer clerical and supervisory responsibilities and with more activities which relate to the central educational mission of the school. This means more time for planning and more time for collaborative involvement in the operation of the school.

> *We're looking at trying to increase the level of professionalism that teachers engage in during the course of the day. I think that we're trying to … increase the time that they do work connected with education or with students in a meaningful way. Rather than teachers spending 50 minutes a day telling 100 kids in a cafeteria to be quiet, I guess our sense is that 50 minutes for somebody who has a master's degree and is an expert in education, we could use that 50 minutes a lot differently.* – A teacher

An emphasis on professional improvement seems like the right thing to do to one particular teacher who feels that it sets the proper tone in the school.

> *I think it has made all of us look at what we do. I personally feel that it's kind of hypocritical to say to kids, "You have to be a lifelong learner because within your lifetime, you will be retrained five different times," and then stand in front of them and be someone who has never been retrained in anything.* – A teacher

> *I think I've just developed a broader sense of what teaching can be. I've really expanded my network of personal and professional associations. All the people in that network have offered me something that has allowed me to improve my work.* – A teacher

The demands of keeping up with local and professional standards are particularly heavy on new teachers. Just as the freshmen need personal attention when they first enter the high school, new teachers can be easily overwhelmed at a school as large and as active as Reynoldsburg High School. "I would not want to be a new teacher in this school," expresses a veteran teacher. "You get told that you're on some group and you go to some group and you don't have a clue as to what that group is about. I feel bad for them."

Teachers who have been on staff for several years can still recall the intimidation that they felt in approaching all their new responsibilities. Those who survived the initial weeks and months often did so by finding some informal help through friends and colleagues.

> *When I first came here, I was extremely fortunate, because I ended up sharing a room with [a colleague] and she continually explained things to me. It was very helpful. I would not have wanted to come up here and been in my own little room and survived this school. There are just too many things that go on that you would be unaware of.* – A teacher

> *They kept talking about these other things, and I was really confused. Being new, I just need to listen and hear it all. I thought we were still talking about graduation requirements and just going off on tangents. I guess there are all these distinct topics that we're talking about, like assessment and feeder classes, and all this different kind of stuff. Somebody else said, "I'm confused. What are we talking about?" Because we kept going from one to another so fast that my head was spinning. But these people all knew this stuff and I didn't have the background, so I'm catching up.* – A teacher

One veteran reflects on his early years and suggests that other new teachers should be offered more formal assistance than he received when he was new to the staff.

> *I was lucky when I came up to the high school, because I had to share a room with a veteran teacher, and [she] took me under her wing. She showed me all the little things that I needed. I had been down at the junior high, so when I came up, everybody just thought that [I knew] it all because [I had] been here, and I didn't. How to run the Xerox — it was different; what the procedures were when you were ill; and all that kind of stuff. Simple things like where do teachers go to eat their lunch. One of the things that I would really suggest would be some type of mentor-type thing. Not necessarily how to tell the person how to teach their class, but just to show them how the school works. … I would pair up all new teachers with veteran teachers and I would try to make sure that their schedules were pretty similar. At least that they would eat lunch together or have common planning.* – A teacher

The school has many established programs to assist teachers in learning the ropes, but it has no formal mentoring system, and many veteran teachers feel that such a system is needed. The existence of teaching teams is one way that Reynoldsburg attempts to fill the staff development gap. One particular advantage to these teams is that they give teachers access to colleagues in different departments.

> *This is my third year here. I wouldn't have wanted to come in not being on a team. … I got to know people quicker and better than I would if I were on my own. The teachers here are so used to it that it's just automatic when someone comes in for them to bring them in. … I probably wouldn't have made it without these other three people on my team. Number one, they're in a different department. I probably wouldn't get to know a history, an English teacher, or science teacher like I have, and work with them, if I wasn't on a team. I just think it's a great way. I was a first-year teacher coming in. Not only for a first-year teacher, but just a teacher coming into the district. It's a great way for them to get to know the school and just to ask these other three people, "How does this work here? How do I do this?"* – A teacher

Informal social activities complement these formal structures and lend the necessary personal touch to getting acquainted with the school climate. As the school grows larger, however, there is an increasing danger that the social component will be lost.

> *There's a small orientation at the beginning of the year, but I think the rest of us just expected that you'll pick it up along the way, [but] it's a big place. Before the new building was built, there was one place for teachers to go when they weren't in their classroom — that was the teachers' lounge. They were usually in there because there was another teacher teaching in their classroom, so we all were in the teachers' lounge at some point. Now that the building is so big, we're all separated, so we don't socialize as much. I think that's a problem, when we have all these new people that we don't have that social atmosphere that we once did. There are formal social activities; we try to get the new people involved in [activities] such as the bowling league. We try to get new teachers to do that, because it gets teachers together in a different atmosphere, and conversation takes place from there. One teacher is putting together a diner's club. Once a month, they go to a nice restaurant around Columbus and try to get as many old and new teachers in that as possible. … This place is so big, that to plan something like that would involve time. We are feeling so overwhelmed right now, that no one wants to put in the time.* – A teacher

Staff development serves other purposes, as well as initiation of new staff members. Those who have gained a degree of comfort in the school are expected to pursue continuing education, either on their own through a university or through options available at the high school. Reynoldsburg High School has entered into a partnership with The Ohio State University and has been designated as a Professional Development Site (PDS). The terms of the arrangement are that the school will accept student teachers and that the cooperating Reynoldsburg teachers will not only guide them in the high school classrooms, but attend classes at the university in the capacity of guest lecturers. Teachers in the PDS program work with preservice teachers in a methods class. These classes typically include teachers from Central Ohio schools — suburban schools and city schools. Participants in PDS work with seven or eight other teachers and one university professor, collaboratively teaching a field-based methods class. University students are at Reynoldsburg High School three hours a day, all quarter. PDS is a kind of apprentice model. The intent is to tie the methods class to practice. When university students learn about cooperative learning in their methods classes, they are also doing cooperative learning at Reynoldsburg High School; when they design a unit, they are actually designing a unit that they will use in the classroom the following semester.

> *Every day I have preservice teachers in my classroom thinking that I'm supposed to be modeling what a good social studies teacher is supposed to look like. As a result, I have a lot of pressure as a model. Everybody who is involved with PDS is in a very public kind of experience. The other big benefit is I'm sitting down with seven other teachers from around Central Ohio who are outstanding social studies teachers, and I'm learning from them. I've been to two or three conferences where nearly everyone there was a college professor. It kind of opened a different world for me in terms of publishing and educational research. It's afforded me the opportunity to be a high school teacher and a college professor at the same time.* – A PDS teacher

Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) assert that a strong body of evidence indicates that other teachers are often the preferred source of ideas. At the same time, the evidence is equally strong that opportunities to interact with other teachers is limited, and that when good ideas do get initiated by one or more teachers, it requires the support of others if the ideas are to go anywhere. One of the strongest and earliest initiatives by Reynoldsburg High School to link teachers together at regular intervals is the program known as Primetime. The former principal describes the initiation of Primetime Wednesday, a weekly late start for students designed to facilitate staff development. The program was tied to the grant for coalition work offered to Reynoldsburg by the Ohio Department of Education. Its back-door initiation came as a surprise to even the Board of Education and superintendent.

> *Primetime Wednesday, in the beginning, was a delay of school every Wednesday for 100 minutes. I never spoke to the Board of Education about that. We [sent a proposal to the Ohio Department of Education and, as a result,] Reynoldsburg got $96,000. That made a profound difference. It was just a real boost in the action. In this $96,000 grant we wrote … that if we are going to continue to work in these ways, around these committees, and really be thoughtful about or practice, we need institutionalized time to think. So we wrote into the grant Primetime Wednesdays, and said it will cost $3,000 or $4,000 for additional bus routes. The board president and superintendent signed the grant. They didn't pay much*

> *attention, they just signed it. ...In order for the board to accept the $96,000 they've got to accept the conditions of the grant. So all of a sudden we've got a delayed start on Wednesdays. That's where it came from. There were some board members that never liked it, but it was more valuable than popularity. [The superintendent] took a little grief over it because it got by him.* – Former principal

In spite of its clandestine beginnings, Primetime Wednesday was a successful and popular venture with both students and teachers. When the new principal assumed leadership at the high school, Primetime Wednesday became simply Primetime. The late start became an early dismissal, and the weekly time for teacher collaboration became a daily event. The high school student day now ends after seven teaching periods, at two o'clock. The eighth period of the day is set aside for teachers to meet with students, with parents, with school improvement committees, or with Critical Friends Groups or to work on other collaborative projects. With the increased time came increased opportunities and increased options. As a result, the teachers sometimes find themselves pulled in multiple directions.

> *Mondays and Wednesdays are structured in terms of "Mondays are school-improvement [committees]" and "Wednesdays are Critical Friends Groups or staff meetings." "Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday are to be used how you need it." Some teachers have used that and are adamant about using that for intervention time with students rather than collaboration. And so that has of been a struggle within the staff — "Is this time to be used for intervention or is this time to be used for staff-development-type things?" And so that has kind of been the big question. I think the administrative vision was collaboration with the opportunity to see kids when you need to see kids. I think the practice for some has become intervention, working with kids, time permitting collaboration. And I think the cause of that was there wasn't a lot of pre-planning for how to use this time before we had the time. I think that would have helped ease that.* – A teacher

School-improvement committees use the eighth period to discuss problems and develop solutions, thus allocating time to work through the problems associated with change (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 111). One of the issues being discussed during the eighth period is the use of that very time.

> *...There were some questions about what staff members were doing with eighth period, since we had this common planning time. So we sent out one survey to staff to try to get an idea of what everybody was doing. We were going to go back and revisit that again, because some people responded with what they were doing eighth period, and we decided that maybe we need to look at what they're doing any time they're not in class, because maybe a teacher is using eighth period for students, or maybe they're doing some professional development during their planning period. So we're going to go back and just try to document what the staff is doing outside the time that they're actually teaching.* – A school improvement committee member

As the staff moves toward structuring the eighth-period professional-development time more closely, many teachers feel that the time is profitable even if left unstructured. Teachers express the need for informal conversations and unstructured time for planning and grading. A walk around the building from two to three o'clock would not reveal that teachers were doing nothing. One might be grading papers. Another might be talking to a colleague and sharing thoughts about their students. Down the hall, another teacher that is teaching a class for the first time might be gathering advice: "This is what I'm doing; what do you think?"

One of the most important purposes of the eighth-period Primetime is to allow teachers a regular opportunity to confer with students. Theoretically, this time can be used for tutoring, counseling, make-up work, or other classroom-related issues. Unfortunately, the regularity of the two-o'clock dismissal has had an unintended effect on the attitudes of students.

> *We have an awful lot of kids who stay after that eighth-period time and teachers work with them. I see it as being a great opportunity for intervention during that eighth period. I think in instituting this that students got the idea that school was out at two o'clock at the end of seventh period; so, for some of them, when you suggest that they stay for the eighth period, they say, "Oh no." In fact, I just spoke with a girl who's making up her thesis credit from last year with me. I said, "You have to meet me on Tuesdays and Thursdays, eighth period." She said she couldn't because she works at two o'clock. That's the thing. I don't know how we can change that attitude, but it would be great to say that no students can work until 3:30 p.m. so that they realize that from two to three o'clock, if you're not doing what you need to do in the classroom, you need to be here at school, here with the teachers. I would like to see student-teacher collaboration improved that way.* – A teacher

Many students do take advantage of the opportunity:

> *I like getting out at two o'clock, but then having the option of staying until three o'clock. When I need help, like for a test, there's a three o'clock bus. You go to that teacher ahead of time and it's real easy if you need extra help. If you're absent, and you missed math, you can go in for an hour and get help, and then go home and not have to worry about it. You don't have to worry that when the bell rings every teacher is going to take off. In my other school it was like that. At 2:45 p.m., the bell rang and everybody was gone. It's really nice having access to teachers.* – A student

In practice, teachers are not always available to meet with students, even when those students are willing. A dilemma exists relative to the teachers' commitment to meet with students and their parallel commitment to participate in committee work. These conflicting responsibilities create a tension among some teachers. The literature reveals this as a common tension within many school restructuring efforts. Wherever teachers feel that an increase in workload is compromising their effectiveness with students, this tension will, in fact, act as a disincentive to instructional change (Smythe & Perry, in press).

> *I will admit there are days that I want to stay. I have a kid come here and say, "I really need help on this, can you stay with me after school?" And it's the worst feeling in the world to tell a kid, "No, I can't stay with you today, I have a meeting to go to." I think that's where a lot of the complaints have come in. I have kids that want to come in for help, but yet I have to turn them away. I think that's where the frustration is.* – A teacher

An ironic consequence of a daily Primetime versus a weekly one is that teachers are involved in so many areas that they are unable to keep track of all their activities. The intended purpose of facilitating communication has the opposite result. The teachers report to each other very little on their progress. Even though they have this eighth-period common planning time, they are "meetinged out" during eighth period, doing many separate things. Teachers express agreement about the need for more full-staff meetings, saying that they have too few of those large-group discussions. When Primetime was Primetime Wednesday, it was for a two-hour period. Teachers who had something that they wanted to discuss could easily introduce their topic. Teachers find the daily but one-period-long time to be less flexible.

Finally, the eighth period is seen as a less desirable meeting time, simply because everyone — teachers and students alike — is tired. Some staff members lightly refer to the eighth period, not as Primetime, but rather as "Pooptime."

> *I think the original intent was to put it in the morning. That way you wouldn't have the problem with kids wanting help after school, because after school to them is two o'clock. After school to us is three o'clock and the kids are not going to come back after school. The original plan was to put it in the morning.* – A teacher

Predictably, the eighth-period Primetime is popular with students. Those with jobs take advantage of the early start in their place of employment or of the opportunity to get homework completed before beginning after-school activities.

> *Sometimes I have to be at work at five o'clock, and it really helps with the two o'clock instead of three o'clock because I have an extra hour to do my homework. Sometimes I work until ten o'clock at night. If I didn't have that extra hour, I would have to wait until after work to get it done. The hour in between is helpful.* – A student

One additional benefit is offered by a student: "For those of us who don't have jobs, we can fool around with our friends too."

As important as Primetime is to the school's staff development program, neither Primetime nor any other of the programs or practices at Reynoldsburg which are designed to further professional development are more well-structured or more thoroughly utilized than Critical Friends Groups (CFG). These are small groups of five or six staff members which may include administrators. Their purpose is to provide an intimate setting for professional and personal support. Members of Critical Friends Groups are encouraged to use one another as sounding boards for their thoughts and ideas. Creating opportunities where peers learn from one another and where practice is de-privatized, represents, for many, the ideal school culture (Firestone & Louis, in press, p. 22).

> *The idea of [Critical Friends Groups], and how they may be working for some people, is that it's teachers doing some effective inquiry, gathering data, and trying to make improvements in their practice in an arena where there's support by colleagues, as opposed to in isolation.* – A teacher
>
> *Critical Friends is to improve my individual classroom practice. In order to do that, you have the opportunity to try something, to discuss it with your colleagues, and to get input. But the whole goal of it is improving my classroom practice. Part of my Critical Friends thing is [that] I'm taking what I put together for my course and I'm documenting what I'm doing on a daily basis for it, so I can look back* – A teacher
>
> *CFG is another group where you can sit and discuss what you're doing, working towards your goal, and get feedback from them. It may be someone's professional opinion or ideas. It's just another way for you to say, "Oh, I didn't see it that way," and to try that in your room or take a good look at what you're doing, and compare that and how that will reach your goal.* – A teacher

Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) maintain that one of the most powerful factors known to take its toll on the continuation of school-improvement initiatives is staff and administrative turnover. Reynoldsburg has added a large number of new faces to the staff during the recent years of reform.

> *I've hired, just in two and a half years here, about 20 teachers. That's a significant impact. That almost represents a quarter of our staff. We're going to have at least seven changes this year. By the end of my third year, I've hired well over a quarter of the staff. Yet we've not formalized any kind of induction into Reynoldsburg High School. I'm looking for a certain kind of person, but they don't know the history or the culture of the building except through this informal network, through CFG, and those kinds of things. I have mandated that they all have to be on CFG when they come into the building, and then they can make their decisions if they want to continue to practice.* – Current principal

The establishment of Critical Friends Groups in the school was accomplished to serve several purposes, one of which is to initiate new teachers into the school culture. New teachers at the school are now required to participate. Many teachers feel that the existence of these small support groups is essential to cover the wide range of things that new teachers must know in order to be effective. "I've got friends who are new and they're going to their CFGs, and they are clueless about what they're supposed to be doing. I think there needs to be some sort of education with that," says a teacher. A colleague agrees,

> *We don't do a very good job of assimilating new staff into collaboration. Thinking back, this is the fourth school that I've been in, [and] none of them did a very good job. One of them was a first-year school. We were all in it together, opening up a school, and we just kind of set policy as we went. It was that staff meeting on the first day and then let it run. I think back on my first year of teaching — I got a note three weeks into the school year telling me to clean out my mailbox. I didn't even know I* had *a mailbox.* – A teacher

An additional advantage to CFG is found in the new state licensure requirements. The Critical Friends Groups are ideally suited for locally approved professional-development plans. With licensure moving in, Reynoldsburg High School is in a position to combine improved student learning with improved staff development. Teachers in CFGs are encouraged to be creative, to work with their peers, and to critically critique what they are doing. The end result of the CFG experience is twofold. The first is to improve student learning and performance, and the second is to improve their skills as teachers. Many teachers that watched CFG from a distance last year are doing it this year. The excitement and the success is reported by those who are doing it. In relation to licensure, the professional critique will come throughout the process. Teachers can be coached by their peers as they move through a project, constantly sharing and getting feedback.

Teachers are expected to custom-design their own individual improvement plan and use their colleagues as a refining factor. They, therefore, describe their CFG experience in a wide variety of ways. Some see it as a way to do some different things in the classroom, others are focusing on helping their students gain critical-thinking skills. CFG might be useful to teachers who want to teach the students to be more responsible or more accountable; for others, it's a support base. Those teachers may be using it for ideas on different activities or how to vary their use of classroom time.

Even the veterans on staff may be new to the CFG experience.

> *I've just started with Critical Friends this year. I have not been involved before. A couple of teachers came to me and asked if I would be interested. It's okay. The thing that I like about it is that it really causes me to take time to focus on what I'm doing in the classroom. When I have to make presentations to my colleagues about what's going on in the classroom, I think the best thing that the Critical Friends does is give me self-reflection on what is going on.* – A teacher

Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) share three important conclusions expressed in the research on school improvement. Each of these observations is well-addressed in the CFG setting. They say:

> *The power of teachers working together is well-illustrated in Little's (1982) in-depth research of improvement and work conditions in six schools. She found that school improvement occurred when: (1) teachers engaged in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete talk about teaching practice; (2) teachers and administrators frequently observed and pro-*

> *vided feedback to each other, developing a "shared language" for teaching strategies and needs; and (3) teachers and administrators planned, designed, and evaluated teaching materials and practices together.* (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991)

This is exactly what occurs in many Critical Friends Groups.

> *I think each group sets up their own style. .... At the end of every other meeting, we sit and we talk about what each person's goal is for the next meeting. I'll say, "Next meeting, I'm going to try to have this done." .... At the next meeting we go around, and not everyone has [accomplished] what they wanted to. Some people will say, "I just had exams this week" or "I had classes that I had to take in the evening." ... But we try to give ourselves goals on a weekly basis — This is what I want to try to have done next week. This is what I'm working on now. Here's where I stand. We put that in the minutes, so it reminds us to keep doing that and to work on that. And we always look back to the week before.* – A teacher

With the exception of teachers who are new to the staff, participation in CFG, as with many other reform options at Reynoldsburg High School, is optional. Not all teachers choose to participate. In some cases, CFG is seen as a duplication of the advantages offered in teaming.

> *As a team we decided not to [participate in CFG], because we felt that we already had one. A true Critical Friends Group perhaps devotes more time to that particular goal, but we basically... are doing that on a daily basis already. Being the sixth year together, we certainly aren't shy about being critical of one another.* – A teacher

Other teachers are simply not comfortable with sharing their teaching methods and professional goals in a group setting.

> *I don't really have time to do [CFG]. I teach five classes, three preps. I don't really have time to talk with other people about things, and it's not honestly my style to talk with other people and get ideas from them, unless they're people who are in my situation. Like if I go to an AP conference, then I feel great about getting ideas from people and sharing ideas with them, but we're doing the same kind of thing. I mostly just have to think things through for myself.* – A teacher

Members of Critical Friends Groups typically have one less teaching assignment in order to allow for meeting time during the school day. This extra planning period has been an incentive for established faculty members to participate, but it has also been a source of tension among those who are non-participants.

> *I am less than attracted to the Critical Friends Groups for the simple reason that I feel that a lot of people entered into that program without a commitment. By that I mean, there was a very concerted effort to pump up the numbers by offering fringe benefits. It could*

> *become a kind of mentoring program for new teachers, junior administrators, and junior guidance counselors. It is perceived, rightly or wrongly, as a necessary step for staying at Reynoldsburg High School by the younger faculty. A lot of it turns into the kinds of things that do not necessarily benefit the students directly in the classroom. I think there are enough teachers there who care deeply about what they do in the classroom, but if you told them that the way you progress and the way you develop as a teacher is to read 25 or 30 books a year, I don't think that's the kind of thing they would find as attractive. To me, I'm just the opposite.* – A teacher

The decision whether to participate in CFG has become somewhat of an identifying characteristic which differentiates those teachers on staff who enthusiastically support reform efforts at the high school and those who do not. The effect on some members of the teaching staff is of the haves and the have-nots.

> *Some of the people in Critical Friends are perceived by others as people who just spout the party line or do whatever is politically correct and don't really think for themselves, and have bought this bill of goods and don't even know what they're doing or why, but it's a popular thing to do. A lot of what happens around here, to me, seems very superficial. In fact, some of us are concerned that [who is] really getting lost in this whole process is the students.* – A teacher

The principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools affect almost all the policies and practices of Reynoldsburg High School. Observing the practices in operation is somewhat like studying the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. It is difficult at first to see how it fits together, but once assembled, the big picture is more meaningful than any one of the individual parts. Coalition Principles are the binding ingredient in the efforts to transform the learning community at Reynoldsburg High School.

It may be that the future success of Reynoldsburg's school programs will be heavily dependent on professional development options like the Rookie Roundtable, teaching teams, and Critical Friends Groups, which preserve a connection with the school's innovative history and still allow for beneficial change. The Coalition of Essential Schools has been an effective platform from which to launch reform efforts, but there is no guarantee about the future, and there is no immunity from discord or disagreement. Like other schools which attempt to transform their learning communities, Reynoldsburg has had to find ways to employ collaboration, integration, and inquiry in a way that improves the outlook for their students and brightens their prospects for the future.

Transforming Learning Communities

Collaboration

> ***Collaboration is good. What's the alternative? The alternative is to have absence of communication, or for individuals to act in isolation.***

The Transforming Learning Communities study of Reynoldsburg High School is structured around three foundational themes: collaboration, inquiry, and integration. Collaboration is defined as the process of people working together cooperatively; inquiry as a process through which we actively seek information and knowledge; and integration as the process by which ideas, structures, and disciplines come together. These three themes are implicit in the description of the high school. In addition to identifying the practices which are unique to Reynoldsburg High School, the school was also examined in relation to the way that these themes are incorporated into the school's cultural norms.

Reynoldsburg High School encourages collaboration through staff-development devices such as Primetime, through the creation of grade-level teaching teams, through administrative advisory groups, and, most noticeably, through formal school-improvement committees. These organizational structures encourage collaboration in order to further the school's personalization goals, to create deeper ownership of the school-improvement effort by teachers, to foster leadership skills within the faculty, and to create an organizational culture which values the perspectives of teachers.

Students and parents are not excluded from collaboration. School-improvement teams, for example, are designed to include representatives from the student body and the community. But the emphasis is on opening lines of communication between teachers and administrators, and, as one teacher points out, this open communication ultimately benefits kids: "The philosophy of this high school is that the student is the number one focus, that we're trying to improve things for the student, and that we're trying to get people involved in the decision making so that you can feel a closeness."

> *One of the things that I see growing, is collaboration among our students. I had a new student in the last week of the semester from Bosnia, in a class of 33. I had two people come right to me and say, "We'll take care of [her]." "What are you going to do? She's only here one week," I said. "We've got a plan. Don't worry about that," they said. "We'll take care of her in the class." That was pretty neat to see. In 23 years of teaching, I have never had students come up and say, "We'll take care of the new person." ... I've seen them like magnets go to the new student, but I've never had them come to me and say, "We'll teach her what she needs to study." That was pretty neat.* – A teacher

Teachers suggest that the students are more willing to share responsibility when they see that shared decision making and other forms of collaboration are an unquestioned part of the school culture.

> *I think collaboration is pretty good here. I think we have teachers who care about kids and I think, on the whole, students are not afraid to go and talk to their teachers — they will seek help and they will seek guidance.* – A teacher

> *Too often we've walked in the room, shut the door, been in isolation, and had no clue what was happening anywhere near us. I don't think that is as prevalent now. I think a lot of people know what's going on in a lot of different classrooms. Part of that came from the assessment pieces that people are doing, where there are exhibitions and they're inviting teachers to be part of the audience, even if they're not involved in that subject area. So you're seeing what kids are doing in other places. And I think that's opening all kinds of doors and eyes as to what's going on.* – A teacher

An important goal of collaboration is greater loyalty to the organization by teachers, students, and parents.

> *They're trying to create their own community, I think, where everybody has ownership ... in what's going on with the school. ... I feel respected as a professional here. I think that's important in doing our best work. If I'm respected and supported, I'm going to be a much better teacher and kids are going to learn from it.* – A teacher

Short and Greer (1997) indicate that organizational ownership means that employees are able to look beyond their own specific duties and see how their contributions affect the larger mission of the school. "Perhaps the most powerful argument for empowerment and other forms of participation was formulated by Douglas A. McGregor (1960). In what he called 'the principle of integration,' McGregor stipulated that the most important work of the manager is to help employees recognize that their best hope of realizing personal goals rests in helping the organization achieve its goals" (p. 15).

A teacher suggests that when the faculty begins to see the big picture, they also begin to set aside their personal expectations and to assume leadership roles intended to accomplish broader organizational objectives:

> *A real challenge becomes to get those other people to leadership roles, not just participating. I think they are content not to be in those roles. I think they're afraid to be.... They're afraid to take on more work. I think for the school to move forward, they need to do that — that comes back to the philosophy that we need to establish — because then people can buy in at different parts, and everything has a focus. I think you get more people involved when they think there's a place to go to; there's an end to it; there's a reason why we're doing this.* – A teacher

Reynoldsburg High School attempts to encourage collaboration through several different policies and practices. The teaching team is a collaborative experience which is held in common by the teachers of freshmen. Complementing the experiences that teachers have in planning and collaborating as grade-level teaching teams are other opportunities for group interaction. Many of these take place eighth period each day, during Primetime, and others are included in the master schedule.

The school superintendent and the high school principal operate other collaborative groups in the form of the School Improvement Council, the Principal's Advisory Committee, and the Superintendent's Advisory Committee. These meetings may take place during the school day or, when necessary to include parents, during the evening.

> *There's a Superintendent's Advisory Committee: we have a representative on that, and if you have any concerns you can give that to them. At the building level we have the same thing, a Principal's Advisory Committee. There are quite a few people on that. It's one that people participate in as far as giving input more often than the superintendent's committee.* – A teacher

Perhaps there is no single collaborative device that has greater impact on the operation of the school than the standing committees which meet weekly during Primetime. These school improvement committees were established during the 1996-97 school year and are intended to formally address specific areas of school program and practice. Based on personal choice, each faculty member is required to serve on a school improvement committee. Their choices include Student Achievement, Teacher Roles and Responsibilities, Arena Scheduling, Attendance, Student Success and Discipline, and School and Community. The committees are made up primarily of teachers, but they also can include administrators, parents, students, and board members.

> *You'll see an administrator on every school-improvement team. Not as a team leader, but just working on the team. Sometimes they are used as a resource. When we need to know how to go about doing something, that's the person we ask. Other times he'll be a worker just like the rest of the team. I think that's one key element right there. Getting teacher input on decisions I think is a big key also. We don't just make a decision quickly around here, because if it affects teachers, they need to have input. Administrators are good for the most part about getting that input and asking teachers to be a part of that.* – A teacher

As with other aspects of school collaboration, the school-improvement teams have come to be an assertive force in decision making. There is a growing expectation among some teachers that significant decisions should always be reviewed by the standing school-improvement committees. These committees, or teams, as they are sometimes called, have completed two years of operation. During the first year, some of the meeting time was needed simply to clarify the role, the purpose, and the limitations of the individual committees.

> *I don't think that we were particularly effective last year. We started out with a lot of people who had a lot of baggage that they really needed to just get out of their system. I think this year we're becoming more connected to the notion that if we want to do something, we have to work through the process to do it. I think it was a combination of not understanding that that was what it took, along with not really understanding what was expected of us. "Are we overstepping our boundaries?" I don't think that it was clear what our role was.* – A teacher

The new experience meant that some work accomplished during the first year had to be modified or even totally redone the second year. A member of the Attendance Committee remarks, "They have been working toward collaboration with the attendance office, the deans-of-students, and the assistant principals to develop attendance policies. The plan from last year was scrapped because that collaboration didn't exist."

Not all the work during the first year was scrapped, however. Certain committees can point to significant changes that were a result of their collaborative efforts. The accomplishments of the Arena Scheduling Committee, for example, drew praise from many teachers:

> *Last year we implemented arena scheduling, and I just loved it. I just loved it! And that team has continued to work together for school improvement, and it's better and better and better. And whatever they invent, then they bring it back to us and say, "OK, now what have we done wrong? What do you see that we left out?" They create it and they're trying to fix it, but they don't want it to just be theirs, they want a lot of involvement from us too."* – A teacher

The Teacher Roles and Responsibilities Committee also created a new practice which is considered by many to have good potential. The committee's mission is to examine ways to get the best use of teacher time. When the monitoring of study halls was mentioned as an unproductive duty assignment, this committee came up with a creative alternative:

> *We're trying to find ways to keep teachers away from the supervisory situations so they can have time to be more directly impacting students. We've been working with study halls, trying to figure out how to reduce or eliminate study halls. We've been trying a pilot program the last three weeks where we took the second-period study hall and assigned two students from that study hall to a classroom where a teacher was having class. So those two students, instead of going to a big study hall in the cafeteria, sat in the back of that teacher's classroom.* – A teacher
>
> *We went to study hall, pulled 25 students, and placed them with the teachers on our School Improvement Committee. They sat in the back of the classrooms so that they had their study hall in the classroom for three weeks. It was between Thanksgiving and Christmas break. The students' responses varied. We wanted to see first of all how they thought study hall in the large cafeteria was compared to study hall classroom. It was interesting reading their responses. Many of them did not like it. Their reasons were, "They could not talk. They couldn't eat. They couldn't sleep." They actually had to study. We were joking at our last meeting that their negative comments were positive for us. Not all of the students returned their surveys. I think I had 15 of them returned, and all but two of them said they studied in the classroom study hall. There's at least one study hall now every period of the day. What we did, we put the freshman and sophomores into junior and senior classes, and vice versa, figuring the age span would help them a little bit. A freshman or sophomore is less likely to be a discipline problem in a junior or senior class.* – A teacher

The future of the study hall experiment remains in question, but teachers seem to be pleased with their attempt. One teacher suggests that the best solution to study hall might be to rely on the school's emphasis on individual choice:

> *I think we're pretty stuck right now. We've been dealing with this study hall thing. I think from the pilot program, when it comes to arena scheduling, we're going to recommend that students have that option when they need a study hall — to go to a teacher's room for their study hall or to go to the cafeteria. Now for our committee, I think we need to find something else to do. We've been kind of stuck on this study hall thing this year and we need to move on, and I'm not really sure where we're going to go from here.* – A teacher

Teachers who speak about the advantages and benefits of the school-improvement committees also speak about some of the drawbacks to pursuing collaboration through established committees. Along these lines, Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991) maintain "One of the great mistakes over the past 30 years has been the naive assumption that involving some teachers on curriculum committees or in program development would facilitate implementation, because it would increase acceptance by other teachers. As far as most teachers were concerned, when the change was produced by fellow teachers it was just as much externally experienced as if it had come from the university or the government."

This phenomenon is in evidence at Reynoldsburg High School. As the school-improvement committees have grown in influence, some teachers see the committee decisions as being every bit as autocratic as those made by an administrator.

> *The decisions that are being made now seem arbitrary. I don't even know who's making the decisions. ...The school-improvement committees... are teachers and administrators, and whoever. They're just random groups of people. But these dictums come down from these committees. Like the Arena Scheduling Committee said, "Students ought to be able to decide if they want a single, double or whatever." Another committee says, "We've decided that every class has to have an authentic experience every year." And they present it to us and they go, "We think it would be nice and, as a matter of fact, it's mandatory. You have to." And I think, "Oh. So every committee can come up with whatever idea they want to, and then just lay it on the rest of the staff and say, you have to do this." It's like, "What happened to academic freedom? What happened to the fact that maybe I don't want to do an authentic experience with this class? Maybe I think to do an authentic experience, as they define it, would be fake or forced, or take me away from my course goals. How do you know what my goals are? You're not an English teacher."* – A teacher

A related belief expressed by some teachers is that school-improvement committees and other collaborative arrangements in the school act merely as a front for authorizing decisions made by the school principal or other administrators. This kind of "rubber stamp" approach allows for the appearance of collaboration, without genuine collaborative expression. According to a teacher, "Many people think that these committees are just a facade for a way for the administrators to have them make happen what they planned all along. And that it's just better to have a group of teachers say, 'This is what you have to do,' than to have the leader say, 'This is what you have to do.'"

A member of the Arena Scheduling Committee recalls a circumstance where the committee was used to endorse a decision even though the decision did not have committee support:

> *All of a sudden they just decided that every class was going to be offered here as a single or a double. That got dropped on the Arena Committee when we had all the papers ready to go for these kids to sign up. All of a sudden we got told, "No, everything needs to be offered as a single or a double." We debated it. We fought it. We said, "We don't*

> *agree with that. That's something that we need to discuss as a faculty." I would think that a teacher that teaches English 9 ought to have some say as to whether she or he thinks English 9 is something that a kid wants to spend two hours a day in. Yet, we were told that was going to happen. However, when it got written up and passed out to all the rest the teachers, it came out in writing as from the arena committee, "We are going to offer everything as a single or a double." ... If I'm a teacher reading this, I'm thinking, "My peers made this decision, so what am I to say?" ... I'd say the general consensus is that yes, they are empowering us, but for the most part the only empowerment they give us it to say that I'm on a team. ... It's still their decision, but then it becomes "we decided" when we didn't.*
> – A teacher

> *I think the other teams aren't asked to make decisions. They're asked to approve ideas. For example, I put together a bus duty schedule. I gave it to [the principal]. He looked at it. He said, "This looks good, but I'm going to run it by Roles and Responsibilities before we distribute it." So taking that to a team of teachers and saying, "Is this okay?" It was really looking for their stamp of approval.* – A teacher

The ambiguity about consensus and collaboration leads some teachers to question the degree of authority that they have in decision making. Some teachers expressed concern that their efforts would not be rewarded through implementation of their ideas. "We're afraid that in the long run, we've done all this work, we've done a pilot program, we've tested it, surveyed the kids, surveyed the teachers, is it going to happen? Are we going to be supported in this?"

> *I think that the staff has to feel like they're a part of it, and that what we are spending so much time on is going to happen; that we're not wasting our time. I know some people are frustrated right now. There's a lot of work that goes into it, and people aren't sure if what we want to do is going to happen. And then once we break into smaller groups, people are frustrated that a small number of people are making decisions for everyone.* – A teacher

There are also a number of teachers who feel that common sense suggests that the principal should make a unilateral decision in certain circumstances.

> *I think that there comes a time on certain issues, especially when you're dealing with a staff as large as ours is — and we talked about the great growth spurt here — to reach consensus with over 110 staff members, that's tough. I think that eventually there comes a time when you have to say that, "This is the decision and this is what we're going with." So your energies are no longer directed towards reaching the decision; they are directed towards making the decision a reality.* – A teacher

Other teachers reinforced this perspective by suggesting that constant referrals to school-improvement committees is simply an unnecessary step for many decisions.

> *Sometimes it even becomes a joke. Oh, send it to committee. Because we know it's going to end up there. Whereas the decision could have been made. Just tell us what to do and we'll do it.* – A teacher

Another drawback to the school-improvement committee structure cited by teachers is that the process is time-consuming and slow to show results.

> *The thing that makes it frustrating is that we have so much dialogue, so many different ideas, pretty tough questions. It's not like when I was chairman of the Citizens Committee and I told everybody that we were going to do something right now to show everybody that we're working.* – A teacher

The advantage of a committee is that it includes a lot of people, thereby broadening the base of ideas. Ironically, the problem with committees is also that they involve a lot of people so that there is a wide range of opinions to consider.

In some ways, the result of these multiple effects of collaboration is confusion and a sense of chaos. In fact, this chaos may be by design. The principal has spoken favorably about "creative tensions" and "organized chaos." He sees dialogue and debate as crucial to the change process. The principal both enables and provokes change. He asks questions such as, "How do you know it's good? Right to do? Better? Why are you teaching that? Should it only be the teacher who determines whether or not a course is offered in a single or double-block? What are students supposed to know?"

The principal probably has more tolerance for ambiguity than most in the school. He is prepared to wait for committees to define their own path and exert some influence, yet still pushes on some fronts (e.g., senior exhibition; single- and double-block choice in arena scheduling) with the support of lead teachers in the change agenda. While not alone, he does seem to politically situate himself to stay informed, to talk through possibilities with influential players in the school, and to instigate a redirection through the structures he helped to create.

In Firestone & Louis (in press), Conley and Goldman (1994) describe this type of leadership as facilitative. Facilitative leaders create and manage tensions in order to "keep the school in motion [and] keep the culture actively reflective. Facilitation promotes, not a 'feel good' culture, but one characterized by dilemmas that require constant resolution to keep the school supple" (Firestone & Louis, in press, p. 47).

One proposed solution to the chaos of collaboration which is expressed by many teachers is a return to a regularly scheduled faculty meeting. The school-improvement committees at Reynoldsburg High School include all the faculty, but the entire faculty rarely meets at the same time, in the same place, for the same purpose. A teacher says, "I think if I [were] principal of the school, I would probably have once a month where all of the staff comes together for a staff meeting. Put us down in the pit in the library, in a setting where we were all facing each other." "We had this drug search thing that happened," says another. "That was the only time that we came together as a staff all year, to talk about that with the police chief and the superintendent."

In spite of the many questions and problems that result from the school's efforts at collaboration, many teachers remain committed to the idea. These teachers feel that the benefits outweigh the liabilities.

> *I'm not always happy with all the meetings and the way that things work out, and sometimes things aren't on schedule, and I want everything to be in this little row. I don't know of a better way to do what we're doing, because we're attacking many, many issues at the same time.... We're all into these little groups, and I think every group is really intent on doing its job and reporting back to other groups.* – A teacher
>
> *... I think there are a small number of teachers who wish some collaboration didn't occur; who wish that administrators would make a decision, and we have to live with that decision, so that teachers could just teach. ... I don't think that those teachers understand that there are repercussions to that, of not being involved in the decision making.* – A teacher
>
> *Then we wouldn't be running the show. The way that I feel here is that teachers run the show. It's just another part of your day. If I don't help run the show, then someone's going to run my show, and I don't like that. I want to be part of the process.* – A teacher

Integration

> ***My kids are like, 'Oh man, we already know this. We learned this.' They just get really excited and they know that I know what I'm talking about, and they always tell me stuff that I didn't know; so we share information.***

Reynoldsburg High School is a busy place. Teachers are involved in teaming activities; students are engaged in authentic demonstrations of comprehension; administrators are developing and altering master schedules; parents are attending advisory meetings; visitors are observing innovative programs. The high school is also a large place. One wing of the building houses the freshmen teams, while a separate area is devoted to foreign language instruction. Music education takes place in one location, while physical education classes are being conducted in another. Teachers at one grade level may rarely see or talk to teachers at another grade level, even though they may be in the same department. It is easy in such a diverse school to lose sight of the connections that allow the organization to operate as a single cohesive unit, rather than a collection of unrelated activities.

The concept of integration suggests that effective schools should tie ideas and programs together in a way that makes communication flow and permits all contributing members to pull in the same direction. Integration might be interpreted narrowly as linking the study of one subject to concepts drawn from another or, more broadly, as the connection between one school program and another school program. Integration implies a sort of extensive and pervasive organizational philosophy which touches all parts of the school. Beane (1997) advocates four necessary aspects to integration: the integration of experiences, social integration, the integration of knowledge, and integration as a curriculum design (p. 4). It seems that this is the ideal that advocates at Reynoldsburg High School are attempting to approximate through teaming, thesis, senior exhibitions, community service, double-blocking, cooperative learning, and other approaches.

> *Integration allows [us] to work with various sorts of people, various sorts of different concepts, topics, whatever the case may be. With curriculum, you go across the lines, and you have to switch from one to another. That's what you need to do. You have to have that skill. You have to have the skills to work with the different people and get along with them.*
> – A teacher

Integration of instruction is the practice most commonly associated with the concept of integration. Because subject integration is so often cited in school reform literature and discussions, many teachers put a high priority on it. Integration across subject areas, however, is not always easily accomplished, and early efforts toward subject integration didn't always result in desired effects. In order to make a connection with another subject area, teachers sometimes find themselves "inventing" curriculum in order to make things fit.

> *We had the opportunity to go to Kenyon College for a week. We would just stay up there and brainstorm ideas of what we wanted to happen during the year. We first started out trying to do a thematic approach, where the history teacher would come up with a topic and you would try to fit in. The first year it was Bridges Across Cultures. We did do a construction of a monkey bridge in the courtyard, but now I realize that that wasn't something that was in my curriculum. I was trying to really stretch to make sure that it looked like the math fit. It was a great memory for the kids, but it wasn't really something that was in the curriculum. After the first year, we realized that we had to focus on a skill. So then it pertained a lot more to my curriculum.* – A teacher

An important coalition principle that relates to integration is the idea that teachers should concentrate first on being a generalist, in the sense that they should give attention to all aspects of a student's school experience and not only to the student's mastery of a given area of study. According to this way of thinking, only after teachers have considered the broad educational perspective should they think of themselves as subject-area specialists. Many teachers find this idea appealing.

> *We do have integrated courses, we have dyads, we have many courses that actually work hand in hand. I think one of the principles that we pretty much fall into the category of, is generalists first. I love that part.* – A teacher

There are others, however, who feel as though their energy and attention are improperly channeled by the emphasis on integration. In their view, the integration principle requires that they be spread too thin.

> *There's that feeling out there that nobody has any definable turf. It's okay, it's acceptable for an English teacher to grade a paper for historical content, and for a history teacher to grade a paper for grammar, and all those kinds of things. I have a great deal of trouble with that, for the simple reason that I really do believe that I know my field, and I know what I'm looking for and what is important in terms of my field.* – A teacher

Perhaps the most serious debate about integration is expressed in seeking a balance between solid content and thematic connections. Some teachers feel that the benefits of subject integration outweigh the need for in-depth analysis of content. The approach favored by one teacher is to cut back on needless drill and practice exercises in order to allow more time for content coverage and cross-disciplinary instruction.

> *Sometimes I have to make the tough decision: Do I have time to cover a particular math topic? or Do I let it slide to give some time for a team project or a team activity? Originally it was kind of a tough decision. However, the overriding thematic learning interdisciplinary connections is more important than any particular skill that I could teach them in math. I need to allow more time for interdisciplinary work.* – A teacher

Once again, many teachers disagree. These teachers contend that important subject-matter content should not go unaddressed because of the necessity to study content that fits together in a convenient way. These teachers are unwilling to concede the importance of the subject that they teach, nor to make that subject subordinate to another teacher's area of instruction. Such teachers may be sympathetic to the views of E. D. Hirsch (1996), who states that an overemphasis on integration can lead to a diminution in a school's emphasis on knowledge.

The whole outdated concept of subject matters was to be replaced by thematic or project-oriented instruction. The result has been not integration at all, but the failure of students to learn the most basic elements of the different subject matters. The result has been a loss of intellectual coherence. (Hirsch, 1996)

A teacher concurs: *"I talked with some teachers last year about going into a science-math-English triad, and the math was going to govern what my students would read and what they would do, and I did not want to do that."*

This sort of concern is commonly expressed by those teachers who teach the college-preparatory students or classes which are in the Advanced Placement (AP) track. These teachers are the most vocal advocates of content coverage.

> *Especially in the AP track, the advanced track, we've got content to teach. We don't integrate, we don't collaborate. We lecture and teach content.* – A teacher

In spite of these reservations, Reynoldsburg is pursuing integration on at least three levels. District integration is intended to tie in the practices in the elementary and junior high schools with those in the high school. Inter-subject integration is designed to make connections with instruction presented in different subject areas; intra-subject integration is concerned with departmental coordination within a subject area. The district superintendent says that he doesn't personally ascribe to a high level of district-wide integration because he is committed to the idea of site-based management and he believes that the two ideas are incompatible. But he recognizes that teachers do see a need for greater consistency in curriculum and instructional method.

> *We are trying to create some discussions between the buildings so that they share a little more between teachers. There's a lot of demand by teachers that we have a district-wide implementation process of curriculum so that every teacher at third grade would be doing relatively the same thing. I'm not going to do that, because I think that's abhorrent. But there's a demand for that from some teachers.* – District superintendent

Greater contact with the junior high school is a goal expressed by several Reynoldsburg teachers.

> *I think it plays a great, great advantage to know as far as what kind of things they learned in eighth grade and how we can carry that on. Right now I don't see that. I have to ask my kids, "Did you learn this last year?" Even the kids I have in geometry, because they'll say, "We didn't learn that last year," and it's something that I expected them to already know. There's not the communication.* – A teacher

Subject integration presents equal challenges. Subject integration can be considered on two levels. On the first level is integration among different subjects. This is the kind of integration which makes connections between literature and history; between science and math; or among multiple combinations of learning disciplines. On another level, subject integration can be considered in terms of how well teachers within the same subject area coordinate their curriculum so that undesirable repetitions and gaps do not occur in the content base of that subject area. This sort of coordination cannot occur unless teachers converse about curriculum.

> *Individual teachers are determining what they feel is the important content for the student to have. The danger of this is that not everybody agrees on what the important content is. So when you have a course which is a prerequisite to the next course, maybe not all students are meeting the basic prerequisites, because there wasn't a consensus. What I see that is not in place in Reynoldsburg are graded courses of study, where you've got teams of teachers in the same area who have come together to plan the coursework.* – A teacher

The means by which schools have traditionally addressed intra-subject communication is by grouping teachers into departments which are organized by subject. In theory, these department members can then meet to coordinate their curriculum. Although Reynoldsburg High School has a large number of standing committees, it has no formal departmental structure. Some teachers see this as a weakness.

> *We have very, very poor, very weak departmental structure in the building right now. Yet we seem to get things done, but I would like to see departments meeting at least once a month, if nothing else but just to talk about what they're doing in their classes.* – A teacher

> *We have not had a math department meeting yet this school year. There is very little communication. We would love to do that. ... We are in desperate need for a curriculum map. I think there are certain pockets of interest that are repeating themselves over and over, where I think it would be really good to find out just what we are teaching, to make sure that we're not overlapping, and to make sure things are covered thoroughly. For example, the Holocaust is a catchy thing right now. I think it's happening in many grade levels. I think it would be really interesting to see what is being done with it in the various grade levels to make sure that it's not happening too often, and to make sure that all the things that need to be covered with it are being covered.* – A teacher

Some teachers suggest that the absence of formal departments within the school is deliberate. To organize by departments may be seen as contrary to the goal of inter-subject integration. If so, it is impossible to have integration both ways. The school cannot effectively integrate across subject areas if the organizational structure is set up to facilitate integration within subject areas.

> *You don't have an institutionalized, department chair position, with a kind of regular departmental meeting addressing common issues. That just doesn't happen. Should it be? Well, I think it should be. But the reality here is that it's not going to be. I've taught 26 years, and there's never been a department chair. There are people who fill in when they need to, but the attitude you get, and I think this comes more from the central office than it really does here from the high school, is that they see the departmental position as creating a wall between. We can only function as social studies teachers.* – A teacher

One approach that the high school is taking is to commit some of Primetime to departmental meetings. As a teacher explains, "We're probably thinking about: instead of Monday meetings with our attendance committee, or our individual school-improvement committee, we're going to alternate that and use that time to meet with our departments... not give up the other school-improvement committees, but to throw this in also."

Another proposed solution is to create settings where high school and junior high teachers can meet face-to-face and discuss the intra-subject curriculum design. There are no plans currently for such a meeting, but in the opinion of some teachers, the meeting needs to happen quickly, before problems begin to compound.

Individual teachers are often the initiators of ideas and solutions at Reynoldsburg High School, and so it may be with integration that an individual teacher or two will have significant influence on the questions which surround district and subject integration.

> *[A colleague] has been doing some research on curriculum mapping. She's very into that, and I think she wants to make that part of her focus on her doctoral program — looking at a curriculum map, the effects of it, the advantages, disadvantages, and so on. It's a really powerful tool. And not to do it only across departments, but across grade levels even for the district.* – A teacher

Inquiry

> ***One of the strengths of the school is that we are encouraged to try new things.***

The Reynoldsburg faculty and staff take pride in their school's emphasis on inquiry. Initiatives such as the Professional Development Site cooperative with Ohio State, the Advanced Placement courses in the curriculum, the Renaissance Program for outstanding students, the thesis requirement for eleventh graders, Mentorships, Primetime, Critical Friends Groups, and other staff and student development programs are all generated in large part by the school's commitment to inquiry.

> *This is not the same place it was eight years ago. We've just done wonderful things. Inquiry is a very important part of this place.* – A teacher

A unique summer opportunity offered to high school teachers is a retreat, the intent of which is professional growth, and the basis of which is inquiry. At this retreat, teachers can pursue independent research and planning, work together in teams, attend lectures and discussions, or simply use the time for quiet reflection. The summer retreat is a result of Reynoldsburg's commitment to seeking the best ideas from across the educational community, and it is fully funded by the school district.

> *With all of those, we just didn't say, "We want to start this." We went out and looked at other schools. We traveled around the Midwest and got to go to other schools. Every year we have our curriculum retreat at Kenyon College in the summer. I think it's a great thing. In fact [another teacher] and I are looking into expanding that to other schools in Central Ohio now. We're going to work through the regional office of the Coalition of Essential Schools to offer that to other schools.*– A teacher

The summer retreat is representative of the value that Reynoldsburg High School places on inquiry. Starting with the superintendent, continuing through the building principal, and extending to the classroom teachers, a constant and explicit emphasis is placed on assessment of the school's academic program. Teachers are asked to consider their instructional approaches and then to reconsider those approaches in light of other possibilities. Current practices are always subject to change. The point of the retreat is to create a relaxed environment for academic inquiry. Teachers are encouraged to temporarily set aside all other distractions and concentrate solely on instructional improvement. The source of their ideas is whatever resources they may bring with them for research or planning purposes, and whatever insights they can gain from interaction with their colleagues.

Teachers who have been associated with Reynoldsburg High School for many years recognize that the recent years of reform have had a transforming effect on the school. One of the ways that the faculty has been influenced is in the general commitment to personal and professional growth. A veteran teacher reflects on the evolution of inquiry:

> *We're looking at possibly picking some new book that's out with some new research in it; everybody read it over; and then we'll meet sometime during the month and just talk about what we read, and that type of thing. I think that's the growth that you see. I don't remember that in the first 20 years that I was here; that people even read any of the research, unless it was a big name. And usually you didn't do anything with that unless you were taking a class and it was part of the reading assignment for the class. Then you became an authority, and a discussion took place. But I think more people are interested in looking at the research side of it, looking at multiple intelligences, how does that lend itself to your class. And I think people are very open in that, if they've read something, heard someone, seen something, to share that with other people.*– A teacher

One of the ways that inquiry manifests itself at the high school is in the atmosphere of academic freedom that seems to characterize the school. New ideas are welcome. Many teachers indicate that they are encouraged to present their thoughts and to try new approaches in their classrooms. In many cases, it is the teacher who introduces an initiative; in other cases, suggestions may come from a committee or a school administrator.

> *One of the things that I'm really impressed with as I talk to other people is the freedom to experiment here. As I travel around and talk to other schools, or in coursework or something, I'll tell people what we've tried and what we've done, and they look and say, "How did you ever pull that off?" I like that. There's a lot of pride in that, because I know the school is attempting to answer the question on how can we make the student learn; how can we make public education more meaningful for the student.*– A teacher

Without an emphasis on inquiry, it is doubtful that Reynoldsburg High School could have successfully established the large variety of instructional approaches which are now a part of the school culture. Teachers have been encouraged to travel outside the district, to observe other school practices, to talk to other teachers, and to expand their own teaching skills.

> *This is a really smart, hardworking staff. ... And professional development is very important here. At the beginning of the year we usually talk about professional development — who did what during the last year. It's real fun. It's just amazing. People have usually done this on their own time, even in the summertime. I travel every year, but what I bring back is valuable. Everybody here is always learning. There are a small percent of teachers that do their little thing and go home, but I wish they weren't here. I think that inquiry is part of the norm, always seeking new stuff, trying to make things better.*– A teacher

The commitment to inquiry is often evident in the kinds of people who are selected to teach at Reynoldsburg High School. Many of the teachers on staff have a deep personal love of learning. *Part of that begins with the interview.*

> *As we interview new staff people for the various positions that are open, the questions come up: "What have you read? What kind of research are you familiar with? Are you aware of what goes on at this school? How do you feel about these various initiatives?" Things of that sort. ... The hard part with a new teacher, they are most concerned with what are they going to do today, when they get in front of 30 kids. What's happening in the research area or thinking down the line two months isn't high priority for them. So it becomes a matter of you talk to them.* – A teacher

The high school's reputation for promoting inquiry is one of the reasons that teachers apply and one of the reasons that teachers stay after they are hired.

> *I think collaboration, integration, and inquiry are all important to Reynoldsburg. I don't think that I would want to work here if inquiry didn't matter. I think that that's really important to students and teachers — that whole philosophy, that whole feeling of seeking — because we're here for knowledge. The more knowledge you have, the more you can impart. The more exciting learning is when someone is always spearing you on. I think that learning should be exciting.*– A teacher

The coalition principles have been a factor in the promotion of inquiry at the school. The existence of teaching teams, dyads, and informal partnerships is often cited as an example of coalition-inspired inquiry.

> *If you're teaming, I think that it makes inquiry easier. I think it's giving opportunities for professional growth so that people are bringing more back to the building. If you keep on top of stuff, you're just always flooded with new ideas. I can't even go to sleep at night thinking of ways that I can make things better.*– A teacher

The bottom line on inquiry might be expressed in terms of expectations. Many teachers expressed a heartfelt desire to see high standards maintained, and a love of learning shared by both teachers and students. Sisken (1997) writes, "For many teachers, the subject is not merely an activity, taking part of the day — it is an identity, and it marks whole lives. It tells not only what you teach, but who you are" (p. 611). In some ways, this statement represents the essence of inquiry. It is a statement about teachers who love learning and who want their students to love learning as well.

> *I think that if you talk to kids — ... you will find that they feel very challenged here. ... I thrive on having a group of kids and knowing that every day has to count — really trying to give these kids what they need to survive in college and in life. ... Why would you put me in a job that anybody could do, instead of putting me where I will really be forced to push, and where I'll be able to lift some kids that maybe some other people wouldn't be able to lift to the same degree? I'm not just going to "teach" Wordsworth and Keats, I "love" Wordsworth and Keats.*– A teacher

Provoking Change

> ***As we look at teachers and people on the change continuum, there are some people who are going to want to adapt and want to innovate; and others are going to want to conserve.***

Friedman (1997) suggests that from a learning perspective, the challenge for reformers is creating "conditions in which opponents to change will be open to experimentation and the advocates of change learn to appreciate resistance as an opportunity to rigorously test their own ideas" (p. 360). In addition to the observations which teachers and other stakeholders have made about individual programs, the staff at Reynoldsburg High School also speaks about the composite effect of trying to bring about school improvement. Their corporate experience with reform has produced broad tensions, unresolved conflicts, and unanticipated problems. Administrators and teacher-leaders constantly struggle with the balance between harmony and creative tension. Complete eradication of disagreement is not a stated goal at Reynoldsburg High School. Indeed, the school principal values a certain amount of debate, and the school superintendent assumes a role as a deliberate destabilizing force in the district. Reynoldsburg school leaders take pride in the school district's identification with innovation and ground-breaking ideas.

The 1997-98 school year was rather frenetic at Reynoldsburg High School, although some at Reynoldsburg may say it was a fairly typical year. Many structures were in transition. School improvement committees, Critical Friends Groups, and certain teaching teams were just barely past the initiation stage and were in their first year of true influence on the system. Other initiatives such as arena scheduling and curriculum review, which were started or extended, dramatic events such as the drug incident; and changes in personnel all contributed to the need for flexibility and adaptation by administrators and teacher-leaders.

The high school's policies and practices are not intended to address any single dimension of school improvement. They are multi-purpose and multi-dimensional in their design and have multiple effects on the operation of the school. An attempt has been made to document the range of those effects for each of the individual initiatives which characterize Reynoldsburg High School. In almost every case, a policy or practice that is seen favorably by some staff members is viewed unfavorably by others. A balance seems to exist between the functional effects and dysfunctional effects of each proposed idea, creating a dialogue or debate between proponents on one side and critics on the other.

Reynoldsburg High School is experiencing several important shifts in emphasis. First, teachers are being encouraged to look outside their classroom walls to a gain a more universal view of the school. It is not enough for them to be good at what they do in the classroom; they must also contribute to the corporate mission. They must be planners, organizers, researchers, instigators, experimenters, and trailblazers. In this regard, the school is moving from local and private practices, to universal and public practices.

Second, teachers are asked to reevaluate their relationship to the subject they teach. They are asked to define themselves not as subject specialists, but as professional teachers. This is consistent with the coalition ideal of generalist rather than specialist. It is not enough for them to be knowledgeable in a single subject. They must also recognize how that subject fits with other subjects and be willing to assume responsibilities outside their major area of expertise. They must assume a role that is usually associated with teaching in the elementary school. The classroom teacher must be at least conversant in several disciplines. In this regard, the emphasis is changing from teaching *about* a subject to teaching *from* a subject.

Third, teachers at Reynoldsburg are not only trying new things, they are pioneering new things. It is not enough for them to experiment; they must also model. Many in the educational community look toward Reynoldsburg as a source of best practices. Those people expect Reynoldsburg teachers to have practical answers to theoretical questions.

Finally, Reynoldsburg High School is a place where theory is expected to meet practice. A belief system provides the foundation, but something tangible must rest on that belief system. In Reynoldsburg, it is not enough to *talk* about school reform, it is necessary to actually *do* school reform.

In this regard, the emphasis at Reynoldsburg High School has moved from what one believes to what one does.

This is not to declare that the entire school has shifted in these directions. Rather, there is a certain tension among these perspectives. In some cases, and at certain moments, one view is in the foreground, while a contrasting view is in the background. The question that Reynoldsburg High School must pursue is which perspectives will ultimately prevail or, more accurately, where is the proper balance of the conflicting points of view?

At least four core tensions stand out. First, teachers struggle with the balance between teacher autonomy and preferred practices. While choice is identified as a corporate value, some teachers doubt that their right to follow their own preferences to not join teams, engage students in group work, or de-emphasize lecture is absolute or secure. They point to the support for dyads and teams, the requirement for new staff to be part of a Critical Friends Group, the statements by those who publicly endorse double-blocking, the options given to students to select single- or double-blocked classes, and the desire to define a senior exhibition as representing an orientation of teaching that is preferred and sought.

Second is an unresolved question about discipline-based or interdisciplinary instruction. This tension underlies numerous concerns such as emphasis on process over content, or on more interactive teaching strategies and less directive approaches; worries that subject integration will result in some disciplines controlling and overwhelming other disciplines; a belief that background skills and knowledge cannot be as effectively developed in interdisciplinary activities; and a doubt that students can be successful on subject-based proficiency tests if they spend a lot of time on interdisciplinary work.

Third, a certain discontent or dissatisfaction exists regarding work profiles. Here the tension stems from a debate about what the job entails, and how varied assignments can become before parity and equity are threatened. From time to time, some challenge the presumed advantage of those on teams, double-blocking, and in CFG and their alleged extra planning period, exemption from duty, lighter teaching load, and fewer students.

Fourth, the change process is demanding on everyone. Those who are trying to bring about changes are often consumed by the time requirements and drained by the battles that must be fought. Those who are resistant to change may be filled with frustration and anxiety, weary of the struggle to conserve and protect cherished practices. Reynoldsburg High School has been awash with new ideas and innovative practices for almost 10 years. The conflicts that accompany change are in many ways an accepted part of the school culture, but the struggle exacts a price in energy, enthusiasm, and commitment.

Moving a large number of teachers toward a common goal is a considerable challenge. Many teachers means many personalities, many opinions, and many preferences.

I'm not the biggest person to jump on the change bandwagon. I'm a little slow to change, but faster than some. I have to think about it a little bit. I'm more of a follower than I am a leader. – A teacher

I think it's a good thing, variety. Not all students learn the same way; not all teachers teach the same way. So it kind of fits together.– A teacher

It doesn't fit together easily, however. Muncy and McQuillan (1996) speak to this challenge. "[C]hanging habits of many different actors with often widely differing interests and to attempt to change an institution while simultaneously running it generates additional concerns, for one, learning new roles as one is trying to unlearn old habits" (p. 18).

I guess that's really hard. You have some people, I would say maybe ten percent, who are very, very much into reform and restructuring, using the school improvement process, using Critical Friends, using whatever measure they can to restructure. Then I would say you have a whole large portion of the staff that is involved in some type of restructuring effort that they're satisfied with, and it's working out pretty well. Then I would say that maybe you have about maybe ten percent, five or ten percent, that don't want any part of that.– A teacher

Teachers believe that resistance to change is part of human nature. They also suggest that some people are naturally more resistant than others.

I think there are certain teachers, even with the school improvement, that don't want any part of it. Some people have gotten frustrated and said, "I wish the administration would just make the decision." But yet, they may be the same people that would complain in the end, "Well, we didn't have anything to say about this." I guess some people are never happy.– A teacher

Teachers who resist change may be uncomfortable with the speed at which change is taking place. Some teachers are more anxious than others to move ahead with school reform.

I like the school improvement process that they've got going here. I know that I come on a little strong. And I think that my team is overwhelmed with me sometimes because I want what I want, and I want it now. – A teacher

Reynoldsburg is such a changing place. It is never the same from week to week. Teachers' attitudes change constantly, being positive one week to being questionable another. The kids change constantly from being very well behaved at the beginning of the week, to being zooey by the end of the week. I think that's one of the things that I like: that it is constantly shifting from one atmosphere type to another. I don't think if it was the same, if it was such a smooth ride, I would like it as well. I think it would get boring. – A teacher

For each teacher who finds the status quo boring, there is probably a corresponding teacher who takes comfort in the familiarity of established routines and practices. Teachers speculated that many of their colleagues are simply too comfortable to make a move.

> *You do what's familiar for you. The familiar way is to stand and lecture. That's the way you've been taught 16 years before you become a teacher, and to do something differently is beyond your experience. Unless you're coming through and you happen to hit someone along the line that forced the issue, or you did some student teaching with someone who was doing something differently, you're still not ready for it. ...You're struggling just to keep your head above water with all the demands being made upon you with being a first-year teacher. To say you're going to try something new — everything is new. Where do you go with it?* – A teacher

> *Some people are successful at what they do, or they believe that they're successful at what they do, and they don't see that there's a need to change. Some people have been in education for 20 to 30 years and say, "This comes and it goes. Why should I buy into something when I know in three years they're going to throw it away and do something else?" ... "Nothing really ever changes," is the concern of people who don't buy into the way we're recommending solutions.* – A teacher

Even those teachers at Reynoldsburg High School who have not embraced new ideas will acknowledge that school reform initiatives are an integral part of the school culture. The high school has entertained so many different ideas in such a short space of time that teachers have come to view instability as a norm. "The continuous improvement, the continuous innovation, it's the feeling around here — trying new things, trying to improve," says a teacher.

> *The staff's attitude toward change is different than other schools where I've worked. They are not only receptive to change, they initiate change themselves. Here it's the norm. Change is the norm in Reynoldsburg. I think what [the former principal] saw through the coalition was the need for change. It was through his leadership, and [the superintendent's] leadership, and then bringing in people like [the current principal], who are also of the same mindset.* – An assistant principal

A more critical faculty voice views the culture as promoting change in the hope that, if the school tries enough different things, eventually something will work.

> *The status quo is definitely always being challenged, but I don't know why, other than because it's the status quo. I'm so cynical: I don't think there's anything that noble around here. Things are definitely stirred up, but it seems to me that if you keep stirring up, and stirring up, and stirring up, that eventually something worthwhile ought to settle out. And I'm still waiting for that to settle out.* – A teacher

Because the school culture is so deeply infused with new programs and ideas, it is difficult for the faculty to see how it all integrates. The early years of initiation have led to so many variations and expressions of school reform, that new teachers are unable to connect present practices with past planning, and experienced teachers are overwhelmed by the population growth and the corresponding difficulties in communication. Many teachers expressed a desire to see the school rethink and refocus its efforts.

> *One of the things that we need to get to ... we need to get a focus for the school. We have gone through, close to a decade now, of trying new things and growth in different areas. We started doing a lot of changes, and we kept trying to adjust curriculum, and now it's kind of murky. And I think that finally all of us are seeing that that has to change, we have to get back. I'm hoping that by the end of this year, we establish those goals and keep coming back to that and realign that curriculum.* – A teacher

Short and Greer (1997) state that, "The process leading to empowerment can be divisive rather than unifying" (p. 61). This divisiveness is evident at Reynoldsburg High School, with the line of differentiation occurring between those who favor and participate in school reform programs and those who do not. While the school maintains its stance on personal choice, those who choose not to participate feel as though they are excluded from the perks and benefits bestowed upon reform advocates. They accuse the school administration of favoritism.

> *I don't know that it has affected me in a positive way, to be honest. I feel like since I'm not on a team, that I'm sort of punished for not being on a team. I think that the people that are on a team get lots of things that people who are not on teams don't get. ...* – A teacher

Tension over teaching time was a frequently expressed sentiment at Reynoldsburg High School. Efforts to encourage collaborative and team-building activities have the unintended result of alienating non-participants. Says one, "If I know that for three years that I've been teaching six periods a semester, killing myself with three preps at a time, and I know somebody over there has two classes a day double-blocked and one prep, and then walks out of this door at ten after three, it ticks me off." Counters a colleague:

> *I had a conversation with another teacher ... who questioned the amount of time I taught during the day. ... This teacher said, "I teach five periods and have one planning; and you teach three and a half periods and get two plannings." I had to sit down and look at how much time I'm expected to be someplace, whether it's with kids or in team time, because I look at that as my fifth class. I don't look at that as planning, because I'm still responsible for being there and dealing with kids' issues. As far as I'm concerned, that's my fifth class.* – A teacher

The effect of these feelings among the staff has been a kind of polarization. It is an informal dichotomy which the staff freely acknowledges, and which is discussed openly and passionately. A large number of teachers referred to this polarizing factor as a clear product of Reynoldsburg's school reform efforts. As one teacher says, "We have a fissure in the staff. There are those that are looked at as the in-people and those who are the out-people — or the white hats and the black hats."

> *I've read about there being like two kinds of divisions whenever you try any kind of reform, and that has been very obvious in our school. I think that there is a lot of resistance to change. ... I do see more of the traditional teachers do some more of the non-traditional things like group work, and not your basic lecture style, but there still are those, and I think there needs to be those classes. Some students, that's how they learn, and they need to have those opportunities.* – A teacher

Teachers who have the greatest sense of polarization also indicated that the division has led to morale problems on the staff. Some teachers are discouraged by the ongoing struggle between the exploration of new ideas and the conservation of proven practices. As new teachers are hired, traditionalists express that they feel outnumbered and disconnected from the school leadership. The former high school principal acknowledges that the ranks of reform-minded teachers is likely to grow as new teachers are added to the staff.

> *How they're employed is where we get arguments. Some teachers who teach very, very traditionally, will say, "I do all of that stuff. I'm able to deliver in that way." And some of them may very well be.* – A teacher

As critics and non-conformists become more vocal, one characteristic about the institutional culture at Reynoldsburg stands out: No teachers report any fear of retribution or censure as a result of their objections. Teachers who are critical of the administration demonstrate a degree of trust and respect that allows them to feel secure expressing opposition. Teachers who are unhappy about the priorities being set at Reynoldsburg High School are articulate and straightforward with their complaints.

> *I know there is a part of [the principal] that respects me, but he wishes that I'd shut up because I make his life difficult. I went 25 years and never wrote a letter of protest to my administrator, and I've written probably 30 in the last two years. The last one was like seven or eight pages.* – A teacher

The former principal says that opposition to the school's reform efforts has always been a part of the organizational chemistry. His opinion is that the change in the principal's position has heightened the tension.

> *I can remember a debate over advising, going into advisory groups. Eventually we did, and it didn't work. I felt like that whole advisory year was undermined by a few. There were*

> *difficult times where the divisiveness reared its head, but for the most part, I think the naysayers were quieted in the early years once they began to see the attention we were drawing, the money we were drawing, the recognition we were drawing. People had a hard time openly disputing what was happening here. …It's my read that they became a bit more vocal when there was a change in leadership.* – Former principal

Teachers who consider themselves part of the counter-culture acknowledge that open discussion and a freedom of expression are still secure parts of the high school atmosphere, giving credit to the principal and other school leaders for maintaining a dialogue with non-believers. They suspect, however, that their complaints fall on deaf ears. They believe that school leaders listen, but that they do not actually hear.

> *Anything I say is swept aside, because it's personal bias or whatever. My opinion is not valued at all. To stay here and voice things, I might as well tell my plant. I still voice things, but I realize it's futile. But at this point, I guess I do it just to let them know that not everybody thinks everything is just peachy around here. … There are times when I think, "I just want to get out of here; abandon the sinking ship." There are other times when I think, "Well, by golly, the pendulum has got to swing back the other way eventually, and things are in such bad shape that somebody with half a head on their shoulders has to stick around and fight the good fight."* – A teacher

The extent of collaboration at Reynoldsburg High School does present a unique morale problem. The concern reported most frequently —, both by those who actively participate in reform programs and by those who hold themselves apart — is that collaboration is a huge drain on teacher time and energy. Even those who appreciate and welcome the opportunity to serve on committees and to share in the decision-making process report that they are overextended and overworked. Simply stated by one teacher, *"It's very overwhelming."*

Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) maintain that there is some evidence that large-scale participation is sometimes counter-productive. Elaborate needs assessments, endless committee meetings, and added managerial responsibilities often consume large amounts of energy and time and, ironically, can create confusion and alienation. "There is even the not unlikely situation where elaborate pre-action discussions exhaust the energy needed for implementation, so that by the time the innovation reaches the action stage, people are burnt out" (p. 62).

The intent of collaboration is to allow the teacher's voice to be heard in matters that pertain to the operation of the school. Metaphorically speaking, teachers are being invited out of their classrooms and into the school corridors. Ironically, some teachers oppose efforts which are designed to include them in the administration of the school:

> *The administration is continually trying to make me do other things — trying to make me do arena scheduling, trying to make me do a master schedule. It's like, "That's not my job, trying to make me do attendance." It's like, "I take attendance in my classroom. I don't have any problem with that. But now if you want me to then call home every time I've got a kid that's absent, I'm sorry, but does that parent really want to get five phone calls to let that parent know that kid wasn't in five classes that day? .... I think it's very important for teachers to push themselves. I think it's very easy to get into a rut. But I also think that if you push teachers too much, you're going to burn them out.* – A teacher

Almost all teachers reported that school reform requires them to do many different things which are not directly related to teaching. Teachers often expressed a willingness, but they were also of the opinion that they cannot juggle so many responsibilities.

> *There's a limit. Sometimes you get to the point where you say, "I can't be stretched any more." It's like I have had times after school where I felt like my number-one priority was to help my students, but I couldn't help my students three days a week, because I had a meeting during that particular time. That's one of the downsides of trying to share and trying to do so many things.* – A teacher

Some teachers feel that Reynoldsburg High School is trying to do too much. They believe that the original vision for school reform has given way to a wholesale rush toward innovation and a cacophony of disconcordant voices.

> *I think at about the time [the former principal] left, there were many of us who were worried. It was past time to start pulling the threads together for us. And then we just started unraveling more and more and more, instead of starting to pull things back together. When things first started, it was really open. If you wanted to try something, you were welcome to try — "We'll do whatever we can to help you try it. But if you prefer to stay the course, you're encouraged to stay the course." Things did start to fall apart, though. We complained and worried that so much stuff was being encouraged that we were losing track of true integration like within the student.* – A teacher

> *I can see why people just have principals make decisions, and everyone just tends to their classroom and closes the door. If you think about all the different things that we've talked about, in addition to teaching my five classes, now I've got to do school improvement. I've got to communicate with the staff on integration. .... You could have millions and millions of meetings. ... We spend a lot of time talking to other people. It's a nice thing to do, but it can be pretty consuming.* – A teacher

The purpose of inviting teachers into the decision-making process is to acknowledge their professional competence; to give them a voice in the operation of the school; to include them as partners in the administrative experience. The unexpected result of this collaboration between teachers and administrators is that many teachers would prefer to teach their classes and leave the administrative details to someone else. Many teachers said that they had no interest in school administration and that they resented the additional responsibilit;. they would prefer to focus exclusively on the classroom.

The usual device employed to bring about the transformation of learning communities is to group stakeholders together in some way and have them interact in a meeting. Reynoldsburg High School depends heavily on this practice, designating Primetime for regular meetings, utilizing the master schedule to accommodate other groups within the school day, and arranging additional meetings in the afternoon and evening. When meetings become too frequent, however, they have the unintended effect of inhibiting, rather than facilitating, collaboration.

> *The obstacle at the beginning of the year is that there were too many meetings. Because we had the opportunity eighth period to have meetings, everyone was just haphazardly assigning meetings. So it could happen that you could have three meetings one particular day, and then not be able to meet all those obligations. You would therefore miss out on what happened in two of the meetings. You know, you work on so many committees, it drains your energy. We need to back up. We need to look at what we're doing. There are open calls for committees. Those who are in the in group are saying, "Somebody else come and do this. I'm already committeed out."* – A teacher

> *One teacher describes the wide range of responsibilities that he has accepted and expresses his frustration about the energy required to reach consensus. It is a temptation for him to work alone. I teach five classes. I do the PDS things. If I were working on any of those, if they're done through this collaborative system where things move too slowly — it's just so frustrating. You meet once a week with a group of people, they talk about it, they get side-tracked on something. I feel like, "You know what? Tell me one of these three things that you want me to do, maybe work with one or two of the really competent, committed people, and we'll just take care of it." I think the result was that I kind of came a little disengaged from things.* – A teacher

One of the goals of the school-improvement process at Reynoldsburg High School is the effective use of teacher time. This has been interpreted as a de-emphasis on traditional duty assignments in favor of more time for professional collaboration. The high school attempts to meet that goal by offering fewer duties to those teachers who participate in Critical Friends Groups and other structures designed to promote coalition principles. However, as more teachers sign on for these collaborative activities, the pool of available personnel for supervisory duties has begun to shrink. As a result, some teachers are being asked to resume former duty assignments. Teachers feel the additional burden.

> *I eat lunch with the freshman teachers, so I hear a lot of their comments about why we are now assigned to study hall duty. I can understand their sense of frustration, almost a sense of betrayal. This wasn't the way it was supposed to be. If we're now becoming junior administrators and junior guidance counselors, it becomes much more pronounced. That really does generate a lot of hostility and certainly a lot of fear.* – A teacher

The foundational concern expressed by teachers is that the time required in managing the school ends up cheating students of teachers' undivided attention. Many teachers value the opportunity to interact with each other and with administrators, but they regret the time that it takes. They regret the distraction from the primary objective of interacting with students.

> *They're not saying that they're going to take away any of my classroom time. They're just saying, "In addition to that, we want you to do this." It's like, "How much do you think you can do before my classroom suffers?" ...They have to understand that they can only ask teachers to do so much. Then it just hurts the kids. I feel very empowered if you let me do what I want to do in my classroom. Let me teach. Don't pull me out of there to do stupid things; don't continue to disrupt my day to do stupid things.* – A teacher

The experience of teachers at Reynoldsburg High School is illustrative of the transformation process of a large learning community. The frustrations that they express are not always an indictment of any person or group of people, nor are they a wholesale rejection of the school's adopted reform initiatives. They are, instead, an inevitable consequence of challenging established ideas. Frustration and failure often accompany satisfaction and success. The sometimes painful experience of charting new territory is the price that must be paid for school improvement.

The teachers and school administrators at Reynoldsburg High School have proven their willingness to pay the cost of change. Sometimes they speak about giving up, but they have rarely acted on those feelings. The history of the school's reform efforts suggests that they will persist in their quest for school improvement and that they will remain faithful to their identity as a model for high schools in the new century.

> *We need to change, because society has changed. Laws are changing; technology is changing; information changes every day. The world is changing, and why in the world would education not change? Why would the educational setting not be the leader toward change instead of the follower? We ought to be the ones out front.* – An assistant principal

Even those at the high school who criticize the Reynoldsburg version of meeting students' needs acknowledge a fundamental commitment to the school. They may not be happy with everything, but they believe that their school is making a commendable effort. When they compare their school with other schools in the educational community, their overall assessment is a very favorable one.

> *I'm proud of Reynoldsburg High School because of what I do and what I've done. Up until probably this year, I really felt like this was a home away from home. I really had very strong feelings about it. I have less strong feelings now because of some of the things that have taken place. But in the 26 years that I've been here, there's no question. ... I'm comfortable being here. There's a sense of continuity when you get the brothers and the sisters, and now when you get the sons and the daughters. ... Can I envision myself doing anything else? I'm not quite sure I can. It's exciting when you go to Veterans Memorial in June and see them graduate, and you haven't seen them for a year or two. There are all kinds of super strong emotions when you see certain students walk across the stage. We tend to lose sight of that.* – A teacher

> *I think our efforts are outstanding. I really do. I look at the things we do. ...My husband is a teacher. I compare different things that he is doing and his school is doing, and I really think Reynoldsburg is on the cutting edge as far as the things that they do.* – A teacher

Visions for the Future

While many Reynoldsburg teachers are reflecting on the effectiveness of ideas and practices which are already in place, others in the school district are looking ahead to the appropriate next steps in the evolution of Reynoldsburg High School. The school superintendent is always on the alert for the possibility that the district might reach a plateau, and he is determined to see that progress continues in an upward direction.

Leinwold (1992) says that most public school administrators and teachers oppose choice plans, because they fear they will undermine the public school system, reintroduce segregation, and, in general, discriminate against the poor. Those who favor choice, however, insist that competition among schools will improve education. They claim that this is an example of market economy applied to schools. The Reynoldsburg superintendent aligns himself with the latter group. He is a strong advocate of parental choice, charter schools, and options which go beyond the traditional public school.

> *Choice is a big part of what I'm trying to accomplish here. I think in a monopoly that we've set up in the public schools, we've really taken away from the parents the opportunity, the responsibility, for participating in the education of their students, and I think we need to restructure public education so that parents have a much more dominant role in deciding educational choices, educational options, for their children.* – District superintendent

The high school principal shares his views on the appropriateness of new schooling options in Reynoldsburg. Both the principal and the superintendent believe that the future of education rests with charter schools.

> *I'm a big charter proponent. Again it goes back to the choice piece. If technology does anything in this gig, it's going to make teaching and learning more accessible to the learner where they're at, and that place doesn't necessarily have to be under a roof where everybody else is at. I like choice. I think that's what you're seeing more and more. Parents exercise choice with the home schooling piece and privatization, and those things that come cropping up. People, for whatever reasons, right or wrong, they're making other kinds of decisions. We have a more informed ... sophisticated electorate. We have a constituency that in some ways knows as much about education as we do. And you have special-interest groups out there that it is their job to make sure that those people stay informed and educated about issues. So it's hard for the public-school person to sit back and say, "We'll take your captive audience and we'll kind of do what we think is important to do." That's why I think the direction that we're going to go, we're going to really create community schools. That's the only direction we can go in public education. If we don't go there, then we ought to have charters.* – Current principal

> *I think what you're really going to have is the creation of these charter alternative schools. There's going to be another institution outside the system that is going to be more vibrant, more active, more responsive to the customer, because that's what their institution is made up of and what they're going for. The public school is going to be pretty much the same old stuff, with some incremental improvements in the current structure, but the real exciting thing that's going to happen is in the charter school."* – District superintendent

The administration's endorsement of charter and community schools does not mean that they intend to turn the education of Reynoldsburg students over to other agencies. On the contrary, the school superintendent sees charter schools as the next great opportunity for creating options for kids within the structure of the public school system, and he would like to pilot such a program at Reynoldsburg High School.

> *We're working on two different alternative charter programs — one for students that are currently not successful in the public high school as we would expect them to be, grade-wise, attendance-wise... and the other is that we don't believe that we're challenging our most able students at all. ...They are just floating through. So we're looking at creating an academy that would be very, very core-knowledge enriched and interactive in a different situation. Those will probably be designed with about 100 students in each core group. ...We would lay out options of what we wanted to achieve and some goals of what we expect, like making it more personal, smaller. ...Part of the reason why we're looking at charter schools or alternative schools now, is to try to break groups of students out of that factory and into a more personal type of environment someplace off-site. It will make the high school smaller. It will affect the high school if you pull off 100 of your most able students. This would*

> *be 7-12 and not 9-12. Hopefully this will happen next fall. We've talked about putting it in the high school. We've talked to churches; we've talked to businesses. We have some people in the community who are willing to work with us to try to create space. We're working and talking to some universities that are outreach-oriented and maybe trying to create a post-secondary option charter that may be in our community. Some of the teachers have been very involved in the design of it. Five or six high school staff members have been involved in the process.* – District superintendent

Others are better informed about the anticipated academies, and they accept it as consistent with the district superintendent's frequent challenges to the status quo. Says a teacher:

> *... Part of that came as a vision of [the superintendent], and I'm not sure who the other visionaries were. [School employees] worked closely with parents, community members, invited staff members, and students in developing these programs. It's been taken to the board, and the board wants more information so that they can make a decision as to whether or not to permit these programs.* – A teacher

Although the promise of yet another initiative at Reynoldsburg High School is not known in detail, there are teachers, parents, and administrators who are anticipating a new era in school reform; a new era which will be ushered in at one of Ohio's leading institutions of school reform. It will be yet another example of breaking new ground at Reynoldsburg High School.

> *I guess that's my point about public schools in general. This place needs to be as diverse as the people that we serve. And for us to suggest that one size fits all doesn't make any sense to me. Never has, never will.* – Current principal

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APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

Central Ohio Research Team

The Central Ohio research team was composed of one faculty member and three graduate research assistants from The Ohio State University's College of Education, along with nine representatives across the three Central Ohio case-study schools, these being Franklin Heights High School, Galion Middle School, and Reynoldsburg High School. This cross-school team worked together to develop a case study plan with common core research questions and some degree of consistency in interview guides, standardized observation strategies and protocol, and document samples across the three schools. Instruments and field visit strategies were then tailored by the members of each individual school team in order to best capture the specific content of, and process for, school improvement at each school.

Members of the cross-school research team participated in one full-day and three half-day work sessions during July and August 1997. The team agreed upon a number of fundamental research questions and went on to develop interview guides for staff, parents and students, and standardized observation protocol for use at the three schools. These broad research questions and corresponding interview guides proceed from the key elements of the Transforming Learning Communities framework. They were developed around the three themes of collaboration, inquiry, and integration. Although the focus shifted from one school to the next according to the specific features of their school-improvement plan, school representatives were confident that close attention to the TLC framework would support in-depth explorations of these three learning communities. The fundamental research questions were as follows:

1. *What is the nature of the learning communities at Franklin Heights, Galion, and Reynoldsburg, including themes, tensions, and complexities?*
2. *Plot the critical path of change at these three schools. Place the description of each learning community in a context which acknowledges the past and anticipates the future.*
3. *What factors have affected, and continue to affect, the development of Franklin Heights, Galion, and Reynoldsburg as learning communities?*
4. *How do organizational structures and norms, socio-political conditions, and local, state, and federal policies encourage and/or impede collaboration, inquiry, and integration at Franklin Heights, Galion, and Reynoldsburg?*
5. *What are the structures, strategies, and support networks that have developed to encourage change?*

6. *How have these structures, strategies, and support networks encouraged collaboration, inquiry, and integration across classrooms, corridors, and into the community?*

7. *How does each learning community assess their progress to date in relation to the goals they have established and indicators for success they have identified for improved student and teacher learning?*

Site Visit and Data Gathering

During these initial work sessions, tentative data gathering and site visit plans were developed. Plans included early introductions, document reviews, shadowings, and observations to be front-loaded, with staff interviews beginning late September. These initial site visits gave each team opportunity to be seen and known before interviews began in earnest.

The size of Reynoldsburg High School, the complexity of the school's daily schedule, and the number of options available to both teachers and students necessitated an extended period of observation prior to beginning interviews. Preliminary interviews were conducted with faculty members during shadowing times. Extended interviews were then conducted with both focus groups and individuals.

From September 15 to May 5, The Ohio State University team spent one to two days each week at Reynoldsburg High School interviewing staff, observing classes, shadowing students, and attending meetings/presentations. The core Reynoldsburg research team was composed of a teacher, the building principal, an assistant principal, a district office administrator (former teacher), and the two Ohio State researchers. School members assumed responsibility for scheduling interviews and for making other necessary site visit arrangements. They also assisted with ongoing revisions to the research plan and various instruments and protocol.

Researchers analyzed relevant documents and archival evidence. Documents reviewed across the three school sites include the Venture Capital Grant applications, school-improvement plans, school district guidelines, building guidelines, faculty handbooks, and parent and student handbooks. In addition, there were documents specific to Reynoldsburg, including a school profile, the teachers' negotiated contract agreement, School Improvement Team brochures, the master schedule, and the arena-scheduling course-selection guide. Policies and procedures, as outlined within these documents, were compared with actual practice as described and observed.

Observations included shadowing both teachers and students representative of different program areas and grade levels, and attending team meetings, faculty meetings, school-improvement team meetings, Critical Friends Groups, and student exhibitions.

Key participants were identified from each of the three schools. At Reynoldsburg, a purposive sample of teachers was chosen from over 100 faculty members for the extended interviews, tapping the full range of perspectives and teaching philosophies represented on this diverse faculty. The staff and parent guides were field-tested during August. Feedback from these field tests directed instrument revisions. The student interview guide was finalized later into data collection in order to structure questions more specific to school and program context, using appropriate terms, titles, et cetera.

Interviews with faculty, staff, district-level administrators, a former principal, community representatives, students, and parents included both focus group and individual interviews. In keeping with Miles and Huberman (1994), questions were employed flexibly, serving as a guide to conversation rather than an oral survey. Interviews lasted on average one and one-half hours, occurring in classrooms, in school offices, in the Educational Resource Center, and at various community sites. Forty-seven interviews were conducted at Reynoldsburg, including 21 teachers, four administrators, 14 students, and eight parents. All interviews were audiotaped.

Data Management and Analysis

Three levels of data collection and analysis occurred at each of the three Central Ohio schools, with one of the project co-directors from the University of Toronto serving as an *ex officio* team member spending approximately five days at each school, the faculty member from the Ohio State University dividing her time across the three sites, and each of the three graduate research assistants leading site contact at one school exclusively.

The Ohio State University research team representatives met monthly to coordinate/compare data and ongoing interpretations. They shared field notes and interview transcripts, discussed emerging themes, and shared these with school team members as they proceeded. The project co-director met with the team in December 1997 to discuss early impressions, and provided written interpretations and suggestions in July 1998.

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Data were then organized, classified, and coded. Initial coding was done using *a priori* codes derived from the TLC framework and from the literature on school change. Additional codes were added as they emerged (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The investigators employed a qualitative thematic strategy of data analysis, making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages, searching for emerging themes, and teasing out anomalies and contradictions between interviews with key participants and the contents of relevant documents and observations (Holsti, 1969; Merriam, 1988). Appropriate software (Hyper Research) was utilized.

Potential problems of validity and reliability were addressed through triangulation of data, that is, using multiple data — sources to provide multiple indicators of the same phenomenon (Denzin, 1970). In addition, member checks were conducted with key participants, asking if the data were accurate and interpretations plausible (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). School representatives to the research team participated fully in validation of research findings. Finally, rich, thick description provides a base of information appropriate to judge the transferability of the findings (Merriam, 1988).

Ethical Considerations

The research plan for the case study was reviewed and approved under standard ethical review procedures for research on human subjects at The Ohio State University. Although the 12 schools participating in the Transforming Learning Communities project will be identified, specific procedures were followed to protect the rights, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants to the highest degree possible within this context. Participation was voluntary, and individuals had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was given a description of the purposes of the study and the conditions of participation, and each signed an informed-consent form. The draft report was made available to school personnel for review, providing a check on confidentiality, accuracy, and the opportunity to submit alternative interpretations of findings. All tapes, transcripts, documents, and field notes were stored securely during the study and will be destroyed after a period of time designated under the project guidelines.

TLC MATRICES

INDICATORS OF	*In the Classroom*	*In the Corridors & the Boardroom*	*To the Community*
Collaboration		Support for School Administration	
	Group Work		
			Mentorship
		Teacher Responsibilities	
			Reynoldsburg Compact
		School Improvement Committees	School Improvement Committees
	Eighth Period		Eighth Period
		Principal's Advisory Committee	
	Student Discipline	Student Discipline	Student Discipline
	School Size	School Size	School Size
	Personalization	Personalization	Personalization
	Authentic Assessment		
	Arena Scheduling		
		New Staff	
Integration	Student Performance		Student Performance
	Arena Scheduling		
	Staff Development	Staff Development	
	Authentic Assessment		
	Double-Blocked Classes		
		New Staff	
	Dyads		
	Thematic Integration		
	Teaching Teams		
	Eighth Period		Eighth Period
	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives
Inquiry	Student Performance		Student Performance
	Staff Development	Staff Development	
	PDS Program		PDS Program
	Critical Friends Groups	Critical Friends Groups	
		Embracing Change	
	Coalition of Essential Schools	Coalition of Essential Schools	Coalition of Essential Schools
		Collection of Data	
	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives
	Advanced Placement		
	Renaissance Program		
	Independent Research		
	Thesis Requirement		Thesis Requirement
	Group Work		
	Eighth Period		

IN THE CLASSROOM	*Student with Student*	*Teacher with Teacher*	*Teacher with Student*
Collaboration	Group Work		
			Mentorship
		Student Discipline	Student Discipline
	School Size	School Size	School Size
	Personalization	Personalization	Personalization
	Authentic Assessment		Authentic Assessment
	Arena Scheduling		Arena Scheduling
		New Staff	
Integration	Student Performance	Student Performance	Student Performance
	Arena Scheduling		Arena Scheduling
		Staff Development	
	Authentic Assessment		Authentic Assessment
			Double-Blocked Classes
		New Staff	
		Dyads	Dyads
		Thematic Integration	Thematic Integration
		Teaching Teams	Teaching Teams
		Eighth Period	Eighth Period
	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives
Inquiry	Student Performance	Student Performance	Student Performance
		PDS Program	
		Critical Friends Groups	
	Embracing Change	Embracing Change	Embracing Change
	Coalition of Essential Schools	Coalition of Essential Schools	Coalition of Essential Schools
		Collection of Data	
	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives
	Advanced Placement	Advanced Placement	Advanced Placement
	Independent Research		Independent Research
	Thesis Requirement		Thesis Requirement
	Group Work		
		Eighth Period	Eighth Period

IN THE CORRIDORS AND THE BOARDROOM	***Teacher with Teacher***	***Teacher with Administrator***	***Students with Administration***
Collaboration		Support for School Administration	
	Teacher Responsibilities	Teacher Responsibilities	
	School Improvement Committees	School Improvement Committees	
	Eighth Period	Eighth Period	Eighth Period
		Principal's Advisory Committee	Principal's Advisory Committee
	Student Discipline	Student Discipline	Student Discipline
	School Size	School Size	School Size
	Personalization	Personalization	Personalization
		Arena Scheduling	Arena Scheduling
	New Staff	New Staff	
Integration	Staff Development	Staff Development	
		Double-Blocked Classes	Double-Blocked Classes
	New Staff	New Staff	
	Dyads	Dyads	
	Thematic Integration	Thematic Integration	
	Teaching Teams	Teaching Teams	
	Eighth Period	Eighth Period	Eighth Period
	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives
Inquiry	Student Performance	Student Performance	Student Performance
	Staff Development	Staff Development	
	PDS Program	PDS Program	
	Critical Friends Groups	Critical Friends Groups	
	Embracing Change	Embracing Change	Embracing Change
	Coalition of Essential Schools	Coalition of Essential Schools	Coalition of Essential Schools
	Collection of Data	Collection of Data	
	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives
			Renaissance Program
		Thesis Requirement	Thesis Requirement
	Eighth Period	Eighth Period	Eighth Period

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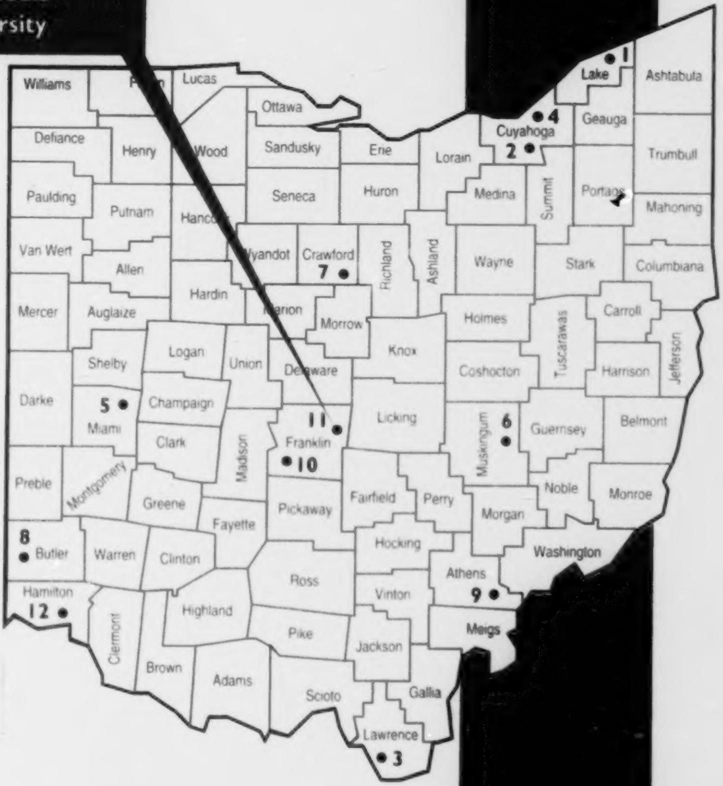
TO THE COMMUNITY	***Teacher with Parent***	***Administrator with Parent***	***Parent or Community Member with School***	***School with Community***
Collaboration	Support for School Administration		Support for School Administration	Support for School Administration
				Mentorship
	Teacher Responsibilities	Teacher Responsibilities		Teacher Responsibilities
			Reynoldsburg Compact	Reynoldsburg Compact
				School Improvement Committees
	Eighth Period	Eighth Period	Eighth Period	Eighth Period
	Student Discipline	Student Discipline	Student Discipline	Student Discipline
	School Size	School Size	School Size	School Size
	Personalization	Personalization	Personalization	Personalization
				Authentic Assessment
	Arena Scheduling	Arena Scheduling		
Integration	Student Performance	Student Performance	Student Performance	Student Performance
	Arena Scheduling	Arena Scheduling		
	Authentic Assessment	Authentic Assessment		Authentic Assessment
	Double-Blocked Classes	Double-Blocked Classes		Double-Blocked Classes
	Dyads	Dyads		Dyads
	Thematic Integration	Thematic Integration		Thematic Integration
	Teaching Teams	Teaching Teams		Teaching Teams
	Eighth Period	Eighth Period	Eighth Period	Eighth Period
	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives
Inquiry	Student Performance	Student Performance	Student Performance	Student Performance
	Embracing Change	Embracing Change		Embracing Change
	Coalition of Essential Schools	Coalition of Essential Schools		Coalition of Essential Schools
				Collection of Data
	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives	Future Initiatives
	Advanced Placement	Advanced Placement	Advanced Placement	Advanced Placement
				Renaissance Program
	Independent Research		Independent Research	
	Thesis Requirement		Thesis Requirement	
	Eighth Period	Eighth Period	Eighth Period	Eighth Period

TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES SITES

REYNOLDSBURG
HIGH SCHOOL
Reynoldsburg City Schools
The Ohio State University



ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

1 **Brentmoor Elementary School**
Mentor Exempted Village Schools
Cleveland State University

2 **Cranwood Learning Academy**
Cleveland City Schools
Cleveland State University

3 **Dawson-Bryant Elementary School**
Dawson-Bryant Local Schools
(Lawrence County)
Ohio University

4 **Lomond Elementary School**
Shaker Heights City Schools
Cleveland State University

5 **Miami East North Elementary School**
Miami East Local Schools
(Miami County)
Miami University

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

6 **East Muskingum Middle School**
East Muskingum Local Schools
(Muskingum County)
Muskingum College
Ohio University

7 **Galion Middle School**
Galion City Schools
The Ohio State University

8 **Talawanda Middle School**
Talawanda City Schools
Miami University

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

9 **Federal Hocking High School**
Federal Hocking Local Schools
(Athens County)
Ohio University

10 **Franklin Heights High School**
South-Western City Schools
The Ohio State University

11 **Reynoldsburg High School**
Reynoldsburg City Schools
The Ohio State University

12 **Robert A. Taft High School**
Cincinnati City Schools
Miami University

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